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**INHIBITIONS, SYMPTOMS  
AND ANXIETY**



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# INHIBITIONS, SYMPTOMS AND ANXIETY

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## TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

*Hemmung, Symptom und Angst*, of which this volume is the first English translation, was published in Vienna by the Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag in 1926. It was subsequently included in Vol. XI of Freud's *Gesammelte Schriften*. An American translation, 'supervised by L. Pierce Clark', appeared in 1927 (published by the Psychoanalytic Institute, Stamford, Conn.), but this was never issued in England and is now out of print. The serial publication of another American translation, by Henry Alden Bunker, was begun in the *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* (New York) in October 1935, by which date, however, the present translation was virtually complete.

A translator's difficulty of very old standing—the question of the rendering into English of the German word *Unlust*—arises with peculiar urgency in the following pages. An experimental attempt has been made (not, it is true, for the first time) at solving the difficulty by translating *Unlust* by the constructed word *Unpleasure*, while reserving *Pain* for the German *Schmerz*. It is to be hoped that the consequent gain in clarity will compensate the reader for any injury that may be inflicted upon his aesthetic sense.

A. S.





## CHAPTER I

IN describing pathological phenomena, we are enabled by the ordinary usages of speech to distinguish symptoms from inhibitions, without, however, attaching much importance to the distinction. Indeed, we might hardly think it worth while to differentiate more exactly between the two, were it not for the fact that we meet with illnesses in which we observe the presence of inhibitions but not of symptoms and are curious to know the reason for this.

The two concepts are not upon the same plane. Inhibition has a special relation to function. It does not necessarily have a pathological implication. One can quite well call a normal restriction of a function an inhibition of it. A symptom, on the other hand, actually denotes the presence of some pathological process. Thus, an inhibition (among other things) may be a symptom. In ordinary speech, we should use the word *inhibition* when there is a simple lowering of function, and *symptom*

when a function has undergone some unusual change or when a new phenomenon has arisen out of it. Very often it seems to be quite an arbitrary matter whether we emphasize the positive side of a pathological process and call its consequences a symptom, or its negative side and call them an inhibition. But all this is really of little interest; and the problem as we have stated it does not carry us very far.

Since the concept of inhibition is so intimately associated with that of function, we may perhaps proceed to examine the various functions of the ego with a view to discovering what forms any disturbance of those functions will assume in each of the different neurotic affections. Let us pick out for a comparative study of this kind the sexual function and those of eating, of locomotion and of occupational work.

(a) The sexual function is liable to a great number of disturbances, most of which exhibit the characteristics of simple inhibitions. These are classed together as psychical impotence. The normal performance of the sexual function can only come about as the result of a very complicated process, and disturbances may

appear at any point in it. In men the chief points at which inhibition occurs are shown by: a turning away of the libido at the very beginning of the process (psychological unpleasure<sup>1</sup>); an abridgment of the sexual act (*ejaculatio praecox*), an occurrence which might equally well be regarded as a symptom; an arrest of the act before it has reached its natural conclusion (absence of ejaculation); or a non-appearance of the psychological results (lack of pleasure in orgasm). Other disturbances arise from the sexual function becoming dependent on special conditions of a perverse or fetishistic nature.

That there is a relationship between inhibition and anxiety is pretty evident. Many inhibitions obviously represent a relinquishment of a function whose exercise would produce anxiety. Many women are openly afraid of the sexual function. We class this anxiety under hysteria, just as we do the defensive symptom of disgust which, arising originally as a deferred reaction to the experiencing of a passive sexual act, appears later whenever the *idea* of such an act is presented. Furthermore,

<sup>1</sup> [See Translator's Note at the beginning of the volume.—*Trans.*]

many obsessional acts turn out to be measures of precaution and security against sexual experiences and are thus of a phobic character.

This is not very illuminating. We can only note that disturbances of the sexual function are brought about by a great variety of means.

(1) The libido may simply be turned away (this seems most readily to produce what we regard as an inhibition pure and simple); (2) the function may be less well carried out; (3) it may be hampered by having conditions attached to it, or modified by being diverted to other aims; (4) it may be prevented by measures of security; (5) if it cannot be prevented from starting, it may be immediately interrupted by the appearance of anxiety; and (6), if it is nevertheless carried out, there may be a subsequent reaction of protest against it and an attempt to undo what has been done.

(b) The function of nutrition is most frequently disturbed by a disinclination to eat, brought about by a withdrawal of libido. An increase in the desire to eat is also a not uncommon thing. The compulsion to eat is attributed to a fear of starving; but this is a subject which has been but little studied. The

hysterical defence against eating is known to us in the symptom of vomiting. Refusal to eat owing to anxiety is a concomitant of psychotic states (Delusions of being poisoned).

(c) In many neurotic conditions locomotion is inhibited by a disinclination to walk or a weakness in walking. In hysteria there will be a paralysis of the motor apparatus, or this one special function of the apparatus will be abolished (Abasia). Especially characteristic are the increased difficulties that appear in locomotion owing to the introduction of certain stipulations whose non-observance results in anxiety (Phobia).

(d) In inhibition in work—a thing which we so often have to deal with as an isolated symptom in our therapeutic work—the subject feels a decrease in his pleasure in it or becomes less able to do it well; or he has certain reactions to it, like fatigue, giddiness or sickness, if he is obliged to go on with it. If he is a hysteric he will have to give up his work, owing to the appearance of organic and functional impairments of activity which make it impossible for him to carry it on. If he is an obsessional neurotic he will be perpetually being distracted

from his work or losing time over it owing to delays and repetitions.

Our survey might be extended to other functions of the ego as well; but there would be nothing more to be learnt by doing so. For we should not penetrate below the surface of the phenomena presented to us. Let us then proceed to describe inhibition in such a way as to leave very little doubt about what is meant by it, and say that inhibition is the expression of a restriction of an ego-function.

A restriction of this kind can itself have very different causes. Many of the mechanisms involved in a renunciation of function are well known to us, as is a certain general purpose which runs through it. This purpose is more easily recognizable in the specific inhibitions. Analysis shows that when activities, like playing the piano, writing or even walking, undergo neurotic inhibitions it is because the physical organs brought into play—the fingers or the feet—have become too strongly eroticized. It has been discovered as a general fact that the ego-function of an organ is impaired if its erotogenicity—its sexual significance—is increased. It behaves, if I may be allowed a

somewhat vulgar analogy, like a maid-servant who refuses to go on cooking because her master has started a love-affair with her. As soon as writing, which entails making a liquid substance flow on to a piece of white paper, assumes the significance of copulation, or as soon as walking becomes a symbolic substitute for treading upon the body of mother earth, both writing and walking are stopped because they represent the performance of a forbidden sexual act. The ego renounces these functions, which are within its sphere, in order not to have to undertake fresh measures of repression—in order to avoid coming into conflict with the id.

There are clearly also inhibitions which serve the purpose of self-punishment. This is often the case in inhibitions of occupational activities. The ego is not allowed to carry on those activities, because they would bring success and gain, and these are things which the severe super-ego has forbidden. So the ego gives them up too, in order to avoid coming into conflict with the super-ego.

The more generalized inhibitions of the ego obey a different mechanism of a simple kind.



When the ego is faced with a particularly difficult mental task, as occurs in mourning or when there is some tremendous suppression of affect or when a continual flood of sexual phantasies is being kept down, it loses so much of the energy at its disposal that it has to cut down the expenditure of it at many points at once. It is in the position of a speculator whose money has become tied up in various enterprises. I came across an instructive example of this kind of intense, though short-lived, general inhibition. The patient, an obsessional neurotic, used to be overcome by a paralysing fatigue which lasted for one or more days whenever something occurred which should obviously have thrown him into a rage. We have here a point of departure from which we may hope to reach an understanding of the condition of general inhibition which characterizes states of depression, including the gravest form of them, melancholia.

As regards inhibitions, then, we may say in conclusion that they are restrictions of the functions of the ego which have either been imposed as a measure of precaution or brought about as a result of an impoverishment o

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energy; and we can see without difficulty in what respect an inhibition differs from a symptom: for a symptom cannot be described as a process that takes place within, or acts upon, the ego.

## CHAPTER II

THE main characteristics of the formation of symptoms have long since been studied and, I hope, established beyond dispute. A symptom is a sign of, and a substitute for, an instinctual gratification which has remained in abeyance; it is a consequence of the process of repression. Repression proceeds from the ego when the latter—it may be at the behest of the super-ego—refuses to associate itself with an instinctual cathexis which has been aroused in the id. The ego is able by means of repression to keep the idea which is the vehicle of the reprehensible impulse from becoming conscious. Analysis shows that the idea often persists as an unconscious formation.

So far everything seems clear; but we soon come upon difficulties which have not as yet been solved. Up till now our account of what occurs in repression has laid great stress on this point of exclusion from consciousness. But it has left other points open to uncertainty. One question

that arose was, what happened to the instinctual impulse which had been actuated in the id and which sought to be gratified? The answer was an indirect one. It was that owing to the process of repression the pleasure that would have been expected from gratification had been transformed into unpleasure. But we were then faced with the problem of how the gratification of an instinct could produce unpleasure. The whole matter can be clarified, I think, if we commit ourselves to the definite statement that as a result of repression the intended course of the excitatory process in the id does not occur at all; the ego succeeds in inhibiting or deflecting it. If this is so the problem of 'transformation of affect' under repression disappears. At the same time this view implies that the ego can exert a very extensive influence over processes in the id, and we shall have to find out in what way it is able to develop such astonishing powers.

It seems to me that the ego obtains this influence in virtue of its intimate connections with the perceptual system—connections which, as we know, constitute its essence and provide the basis of its differentiation from the id. In its function the perceptual system, which we

have called Pcpt.-Cs., is bound up with the phenomenon of consciousness. It receives excitations not only from outside but from within and endeavours, by means of the pleasure-unpleasure sensations which reach it from these directions, to direct the course of every mental event in accordance with the pleasure-principle. We are very apt to think of the ego as powerless against the id; but when it is opposed to an instinctual process it has only to give a 'signal of unpleasure' in order to attain its object with the aid of that almost omnipotent institution, the pleasure-principle. To take this situation by itself for a moment, we can illustrate it by an example from another field. Let us imagine a country in which a certain small faction objects to a proposed measure the passage of which would have the support of the masses. This minority obtains command of the press and by its help manipulates the supreme arbiter, 'public opinion', and so succeeds in preventing the measure from being passed.

But this explanation opens up fresh problems. Whence does the energy come which is employed for giving the signal of unpleasure? Here we may be assisted by the idea that a defence

against an unwelcome *internal* process will be modelled upon the defence adopted against an *external* stimulus, that the ego wards off internal and external dangers alike along identical lines. In the case of external danger the organism has recourse to attempts at flight. The first thing it does is to withdraw cathexis from the perception of the dangerous object; later on it discovers that it is a better plan to perform muscular movements of such a sort as will render perception of the dangerous object impossible even in the absence of any refusal to perceive it—that it is a better plan, that is, to remove itself from the sphere of danger. Repression is an equivalent of this attempt at flight. The ego withdraws its (pre-conscious) cathexis from the psychical representative of the impulse that is to be repressed and uses that cathexis for the purpose of releasing unpleasure (anxiety). The problem of how anxiety arises in connection with repression may be no simple one; but we may legitimately maintain the opinion that the ego is the actual seat of anxiety and give up our earlier view that the cathectic energy of a repressed impulse is automatically turned into anxiety. If I expressed myself in the latter sense on

former occasions, I was giving a phenomenological description and not a metapsychological explanation of what was occurring.

This brings us to a further question: how is it possible, from an economic point of view, for a mere process of withdrawal and discharge like the withdrawing of a pre-conscious ego-cathexis to produce unpleasure or anxiety, seeing that, according to our assumptions, unpleasure and anxiety can only arise as a result of an *increase* in cathexis? The reply is that this causal sequence should not be explained from an economic point of view. In repression anxiety is not newly created; it is reproduced as an affective state on the model of an already existing memory picture. If we go further and enquire into the origin of that anxiety—and of affects in general—we shall be leaving the realm of pure psychology and entering the confines of physiology. Affective states have become incorporated in the mind as precipitates of *primaevae* traumatic experiences, and when a similar situation occurs they are revived in the form of memory symbols. I do not think I have been wrong in likening them to the more recent and individually acquired hysterical

attack and in regarding them as normal prototypes of it. In man and the higher animals it would seem that the act of birth, as the individual's first experience of anxiety, has given the affect of anxiety certain characteristic forms of expression. But, while acknowledging this connection, we must not lay undue stress on it nor overlook the fact that biological necessity demands that a situation of danger should have an affective symbol, so that a symbol of this kind would have to be created in any case. Moreover, I do not think that we are justified in assuming that whenever there is an outbreak of anxiety something like a reproduction of the situation of birth goes on in the mind. It is not even certain whether hysterical attacks, though they were originally traumatic reproductions of this sort, permanently retain that character.

As I have shown elsewhere, most of the repressions with which we have to deal in our therapeutic work are cases of after-expulsion. They presuppose the operation of earlier, primal repressions which exert an attraction on the more recent situation. Far too little is known as yet about the background and preliminary stages of repression. There is a danger of over-



estimating the part played in repression by the super-ego. We cannot at present say, for instance, whether it is the emergence of the super-ego which provides the line of demarcation between primal repression and after-expulsion. At any rate, the earliest outbreaks of anxiety, which are of a very intense kind, occur before the super-ego has become differentiated. It is highly probable that the precipitating causes of primal repression are quantitative factors such as an excessive degree of excitation and the breaking through of the protective barrier against stimuli.

This mention of the protective barrier sounds a note which recalls to us the fact that repressions occur in two different situations, namely, when an undesirable instinctual impulse is aroused by some external perception, and when it arises internally without any such provocation. We shall return to this difference presently. But the protective barrier only exists in regard to external stimuli, not in regard to internal instinctual demands.

So long as we direct our attention to the ego's attempt at flight we shall get no nearer to the subject of symptom-formation. A symptom

arises from an instinctual impulse which has been prejudicially affected by repression. If the ego, by making use of the signal of unpleasure, attains its object of completely suppressing the instinctual impulse, we learn nothing of how this has happened. We can only find out about it from those cases in which repression has to a greater or less extent failed. In this event the position, generally speaking, is that the instinctual impulse has found a substitute in spite of repression, but a substitute which is very much reduced, displaced and inhibited and which is no longer recognizable as a gratification. And when the impulse is carried out there is no sensation of pleasure; its carrying out has, instead, the quality of a compulsion.

In thus degrading a gratificatory process to a symptom, repression displays its power in a further respect. The substitutive process is prevented, if possible, from finding discharge through motility; and even if this cannot be done the process is forced to expend itself in making alterations in the subject's own body and is not permitted to impinge upon the outer world. It may not be transformed into action. For, as we know, in repression the ego is

operating under the influence of external reality and therefore it debars the substitutive process from having any effect upon that reality.

Just as the ego controls the path to action in regard to the outer world, so it controls access to consciousness. In repression it displays its power in both directions, acting in the one manner upon the instinctual impulse itself and in the other upon the psychical representative of that impulse. At this point it is relevant to ask how I can reconcile this acknowledgment of the might of the ego with the description of its position which I gave in *The Ego and the Id*. In that book I drew a picture of its dependence upon the id and upon the super-ego which revealed how powerless and apprehensive it was in regard to both and with what an effort it maintained its superiority over them. This view has been widely echoed in psycho-analytic literature. A great deal of stress has been laid on the weakness of the ego in relation to the id and of our rational elements in the face of the daemonic forces within us; and there is a strong tendency to make what I have said into a foundation-stone of a psycho-analytic *Weltanschauung*. Yet surely the psycho-analyst, with

his knowledge of the way in which repression works, should, of all people, be restrained from adopting such extreme and one-sided views.

I must confess that I am not at all partial to the fabrication of *Weltanschauungen*. Such activities may be left to philosophers, who avowedly find it impossible to make their journey through life without a Baedeker of that kind to tell them all about everything. Let us humbly accept the contempt with which they look down on us from the vantage-ground of their superior needs. But since we too cannot forgo our narcissistic pride, we will draw comfort from the reflection that such 'Guides to Life' soon grow out of date and that it is precisely short-sighted, narrow and finicky work like ours which obliges them to appear in new editions, and that even the most up-to-date of them are nothing but attempts to find a substitute for the ancient, useful and all-embracing catechism. We know well enough how little light science has so far been able to throw on the problems that surround us. But however much ado the philosophers may make, they cannot alter the situation. Only patient, persevering research, in which everything is subordinated

the one requirement of certainty, can gradually bring about a change. The benighted veller may sing aloud in the dark to deny own fears; but, for all that, he will not see an inch further beyond his nose.

### CHAPTER III

To return to this problem about the ego. The apparent contradiction is due to our having taken abstractions too rigidly and attended exclusively now to the one side and now to the other of what is in reality a complicated state of affairs. We were justified, I think, in dividing the ego from the id, for there were certain considerations which necessitated that step. On the other hand the ego is identical with the id, and is merely a specially differentiated part of it. If we regard this part by itself in contradistinction to the whole, or if a real split has occurred between the two, the weakness of the ego becomes apparent. But if the ego remains bound up with the id and indistinguishable from it, then it displays its power. The same is true of the relation between the ego and the super-ego. In many situations the two are merged; and as a rule we can only distinguish one from the other when there is a tension or conflict between them. In repression the de-

cisive fact is that the ego is an organization and the id is not. The ego is, indeed, the organized  
✓ portion of the id. We should be quite wrong in picturing the ego and the id as two opposing camps and in thinking that, when the ego tries to suppress a part of the id by means of repression, the remainder of the id comes to the rescue of the endangered part and measures its strength with the ego. This may often be what happens but it is not the primary situation in repression. As a rule the instinctual impulse which is to be repressed remains isolated. Although the act of repression demonstrates the strength of the ego, in one particular it reveals the ego's powerlessness and reveals, too, how impervious to influence are the separate instinctual impulses of the id. For the mental process which has been turned into a symptom owing to repression maintains its existence outside the organization of the ego and independently of it. Indeed, it is not the process alone but all its derivatives which enjoy, as it were, the privilege of extra-territoriality; and whenever they come into associative contact with a part of the ego-organization, it is not at all certain that they will not draw that part over to

themselves and thus enlarge themselves at the expense of the ego. Long ago I compared a symptom to a foreign body which was keeping up a constant succession of stimuli and reactions in the tissue in which it was embedded. It does sometimes happen that the defensive struggle against an unwelcome instinctual impulse is brought to an end with the formation of a symptom. As far as can be seen, this is most often possible in hysterical conversions. But usually the outcome is different. The initial act of repression is followed by tedious and often interminable manœuvres in which the struggle against the instinctual impulse is prolonged into a struggle against the symptom.

In this secondary defensive struggle the ego faces two ways. The one line of behaviour it adopts springs from the fact that its very nature obliges it to make what must be regarded as an attempt at restoration or reconciliation. The ego is an organization. It is based upon the maintenance of free intercourse and of the possibility of reciprocal influence between all its parts. Its de-sexualized energy still shows traces of its origin in its tendency to bind together and unify, and this necessity to synthesize grows



stronger in proportion as the strength of the ego increases. It is therefore only natural that the ego should try to prevent symptoms from remaining isolated and foreign by using every possible method to bind them to itself in one way or another, and to incorporate them in its organization by means of those bonds. As we know, a tendency of this kind is already operative in the very act of forming a symptom. A classical instance of this are those hysterical symptoms which have been shown to be a compromise between the need for gratification and the need for punishment. Such symptoms participate in the ego from the very beginning, since they fulfil a requirement of the super-ego, while on the other hand they represent positions occupied by the repressed and points at which an irruption has been made by it into the ego-organization. They are a kind of frontier-position with a mixed cathexis. (Whether all primary hysterical symptoms are constructed on these lines would be worth enquiring into very carefully.) The ego now proceeds to behave as though it recognized that the symptom had come to stay and that the only thing to do was to accept the situation in good part and

draw as much advantage from it as possible. It makes an adaptation to the symptom—to this piece of the internal world which is alien to it—just as it normally does to the objective, external world. It can always find plenty of opportunities for doing so. The presence of a symptom may entail a certain impairment of the capacities of the individual, and this can be exploited to appease some demand on the part of the super-ego or to refuse some requirement coming from the external world. In this way the symptom gradually grows to be the representative of important interests; it is found to be useful for the maintenance of the self and becomes more and more closely merged with the ego and more and more indispensable to it. It is only very rarely that the physical process of 'healing' round a foreign body follows such a course as this. There is a danger, too, of exaggerating the importance of a secondary adaptation of this kind to a symptom, and of saying that the ego has created the symptom merely in order to enjoy its advantages. It would be equally true to say that a man who had lost his leg in the war had got it shot away so that he might thenceforward live

on his pension without having to work any more.

In obsessional neurosis and paranoia the forms which the symptoms assume become very valuable to the ego because they obtain for it, not certain advantages, but a narcissistic gratification which it would otherwise forgo. The systems which the obsessional neurotic constructs flatter his self-esteem by making him feel that he is better than others because he is specially cleanly or specially conscientious. The delusional constructions of the paranoiac offer to his acute perceptive and imaginative powers a field of activity which he could not easily find elsewhere.

All of this results in what is known as the *epinosic gain* of a neurosis. This epinosic gain comes to the assistance of the ego in its endeavour to incorporate the symptom and increases the fixation of the latter. When the analyst tries to help the ego in its struggle against the symptom, he finds that these reconciliatory bonds between ego and symptom operate on the side of the resistances and that they are not easy to loosen.

The two lines of behaviour which the ego adopts towards the symptom are in fact directly opposed to each other. For the other line is less

friendly in character, since it continues in the direction of repression. Nevertheless the ego, it appears, cannot be accused of inconsistency. Being of a peaceable disposition it would like to incorporate the symptom in its framework. It is from the symptom itself that the trouble comes. For the symptom, being the true substitute and derivative of the repressed impulse, carries on the rôle of the latter; it continually renews its demands for gratification and thus obliges the ego in its turn to give the signal of unpleasure and put itself in a posture of defence.

The secondary defensive struggle against the symptom is many-sided. It is fought out on many fields and makes use of a multitude of means. We shall not be able to say much about it until we have made an enquiry into individual cases of symptom-formation. In doing this we shall have an opportunity of going into the problem of anxiety—a problem which has long been looming in the background. The wisest plan will be, I think, to start from the symptoms produced by the hysterical neuroses; for we are not as yet in a position to consider the conditions in which the symptoms of obsessional neurosis, paranoia and other neuroses are formed.

## CHAPTER IV

LET us take as our first example an infantile hysterical phobia of animals. We will select the case of Little Hans,<sup>1</sup> whose phobia of horses was undoubtedly typical in all its main features. The first thing that is apparent is that in a concrete case of neurotic illness the state of affairs is much more complex than one would suppose so long as one was dealing with abstractions. It takes some time to orientate oneself and to decide which the repressed impulse is, what substitutive symptom it has found and where the motive for repression lies.

Little Hans refused to go out into the street because he was afraid of horses. This is the raw material of the case. Which part of it constitutes the symptom? Is it his having the fear? Is it his choice of an object for his fear? Is it his giving up of his freedom of movement? Or is it more than one of these combined? What is the

<sup>1</sup> Freud, 'Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy' (1909), *Collected Papers*, vol. iii.

gratification which he renounces? And why does he have to renounce it?

At a first glance one is tempted to reply that the case is not so very obscure. Little Hans's unaccountable fear of horses is the symptom and his inability to go out into the streets is an inhibition, a restriction which his ego has imposed on itself so as not to arouse the anxiety-symptom. The second point is clearly correct; and in the discussion which follows I shall not concern myself any further with this inhibition. As regards what was presumably the symptom, a superficial acquaintance with the case does not even disclose its true formulation. For further investigation shows that what he was suffering from was not a vague fear of horses but a quite definite apprehension that a horse was going to bite him. This idea, indeed, was endeavouring to withdraw from consciousness and get itself replaced by an undefined phobia in which only the anxiety and its object still appeared. Was it perhaps this idea which was the nucleus of his symptom?

We shall not make any headway until we have reviewed the little boy's psychological situation as a whole as it came to light in the

course of analytic treatment. He was at that time in the Oedipus position, with its attendant feelings of jealousy and hostility towards his father whom nevertheless—except in so far as his mother was the cause of estrangement—he dearly loved. Here, then, we have a conflict due to ambivalence: a firmly rooted love and a no less well grounded hatred directed against one and the same person. Little Hans's phobia must be an attempt to solve this conflict. Conflicts of this kind due to ambivalence are very frequent and they can have another typical outcome, in which one of the two conflicting feelings (usually that of affection) becomes enormously enhanced and the other vanishes. Only the exaggerated degree and compulsive character of the feeling that remains betray the fact that it is not the sole one in existence but is continually on the alert to keep the opposite feeling under suppression, and enables us to postulate the operation of a process which we call repression by means of reaction-formation (in the ego). Cases like Little Hans's show no traces of a reaction-formation of this kind. There are clearly different ways of egress from a conflict of ambivalence.

Meanwhile we have been able to establish another point with certainty. The instinctual impulse which underwent repression in Little Hans was a hostile one against his father. Proof of this was obtained in his analysis while the idea of the biting horse was being followed up. Hans had seen a horse fall down and he had also seen a playmate, with whom he was playing at horses, fall down and hurt himself. Analysis justified the inference that he had a conative impulse that his father should fall down and hurt himself as his playmate and the horse had done. Moreover, his attitude towards someone's departure on a certain occasion makes it probable that his wish that his father should be out of the way found a less hesitating expression. But a wish of this sort is tantamount to an intention of putting the father out of the way oneself—is tantamount, that is, to the murderous impulse which is one component of the Oedipus complex.

So far there seem to be no connecting links between Little Hans's repressed instinctual impulse and the substitute for it which we suspect is to be seen in his phobia of horses. Let us simplify his psychological situation by setting



on one side the elements of infancy and ambivalence. Let us imagine that he is a young servant who is in love with the mistress of the house and has received some tokens of her favour. He hates his master who is more powerful than he, and he would like to have him out of the way. It would then be eminently natural for him to be afraid of his master and to dread his vengeance—just as Little Hans was frightened of horses. We cannot, therefore, describe the anxiety belonging to this phobia as a symptom. If Little Hans, being in love with his mother, had shown fear of his father, we should have no right to say that he had a neurosis or a phobia. His emotional reaction would have been entirely comprehensible. What made it a neurosis was one thing alone: the replacement of his father by a horse. It is this displacement, then, which has a claim to be called a symptom, and which, incidentally, constitutes the alternative mechanism which enables a conflict due to ambivalence to be resolved without the aid of a reaction-formation. Such a displacement is made possible or facilitated at Little Hans's early age because the inborn traces of totemistic thought can still be easily revived. Children do

not as yet recognize or, at any rate, lay such exaggerated stress upon the gulf that separates human beings from the animal world. In their eyes the grown man, the object of their fear and admiration, still belongs to the same category as the big animal who has so many enviable attributes but against whom they have been warned because he may become dangerous. As we see, the conflict of ambivalence is not dealt with in relation to one and the same person; it is circumvented, as it were, by one of the pair of conflicting impulses being directed to a vicarious figure.

So far everything is clear. But the analysis of Little Hans's phobia has been very disappointing in one respect. The distortion which constituted the symptom-formation was not applied to the psychical representative (the ideational content) of the instinctual impulse that was to be repressed; it was applied to a quite different representative and one which only corresponded to a *reaction* to the disagreeable instinct. It would be more in accordance with our expectations if Little Hans had developed, instead of a fear of horses, an inclination to ill-treat them and to beat them or if

he had expressed in strong terms a wish to see them fall down or be hurt or even die in agony ('make a row with their feet'). Something of the sort did in fact emerge in his analysis, but it was not by any means in the forefront of his neurosis. And, curiously enough, if he really had produced an animosity of this sort not against his father but against horses as his main symptom, we should not have said that he was suffering from a neurosis. There must be something amiss either with our view of repression or with our definition of a symptom. One thing strikes us at once: if Little Hans had really behaved in such a way to horses, it would mean that repression had in no way altered the character of his objectionable and aggressive impulses themselves but only the object against which they were directed.

Undoubtedly there are cases in which this is all that repression does. But more than this has happened in the development of Little Hans's phobia—how much more can be guessed from another analysis.

As we know, Little Hans alleged that what he was afraid of was that a horse would bite him. Now some time later I was able to learn

something about the origin of another animal phobia. In this instance the dreaded animal was a wolf; it, too, had the significance of a father-substitute.<sup>1</sup> As a boy the patient in question—a Russian whom I did not analyse until he had reached his thirties—had had a dream (whose meaning was revealed in analysis) and immediately after it had developed a fear of being eaten up by a wolf, like the seven little goats in the fairy tale. In the case of Little Hans the ascertained fact that his father used to play at horses with him doubtless determined his choice of a horse as his anxiety-animal. In the same way it appeared at least highly probable that the father of my Russian patient used, when playing with him, to pretend to be a wolf and jokingly threaten to eat him up. Since then I have come across a third instance. The patient was a young American who came to me for treatment. True, he had not developed an actual animal phobia, but it was precisely because of this omission that his case helped to throw light upon the other two. As a child he had been sexually excited by a fantastic

<sup>1</sup> Freud, 'From the History of an Infantile Neurosis' (1918), *Collected Papers*, vol. iii.

children's story which had been read aloud to him about an Arab chief who pursued a ginger-bread man so as to eat him up. He identified himself with this edible person, and the Arab chief was easily recognizable as a father-substitute. This phantasy formed the substratum of his auto-erotic phantasies.

The idea of being devoured by the father is typical, age-old and common to all children. It has familiar parallels in mythology (the myth of Cronos) and in the animal kingdom. Yet in spite of this such an idea is so strange to us that we can hardly credit its existence in a child. Nor do we know whether it really means what it seems to, and we cannot understand how it can have become the subject-matter of a phobia. Analytic observation supplies the requisite information. It shows that the idea of being eaten by the father gives expression, in a form that has undergone regressive degradation, to a passive, tender impulse to be loved by him in a genital-erotic way.

Further research into the case-history of the Wolf Man leaves no doubt of the correctness of this explanation. The genital impulse, it is true, betrays no sign of its tender inclination

when it is expressed in the language belonging to that transition phase between the oral and sadistic organization of the libido which has been left behind. Besides, is it merely a question of the replacement of a particular psychical representative by a regressive form of expression or is it a question of the genuine regressive degradation of a genitally orientated impulse in the id? It is not at all easy to make certain. The case-history of the Wolf Man gives very definite support to the second, more serious, view, for, from the time of the decisive dream onward, the boy became naughty, tormenting and sadistic, and soon after developed a regular obsessional neurosis. At any rate we can see that repression is not the only means which the ego can employ for the purpose of defence against an unwelcome instinctual impulse. If it succeeds in making an instinct regress it will actually have done it much more injury than it could have by repressing it. Sometimes, indeed, after forcing an instinct to regress in this way, it goes on to repress it.

The case of the Wolf Man and the somewhat less complicated one of Little Hans raise a number of further considerations. But we al-

ready learn two unexpected facts. There can be no doubt that the instinctual impulse which was repressed in both phobias was a hostile one against the father. One might say that that impulse had been repressed by being reversed. Instead of aggressiveness *towards* the father there appeared aggressiveness *from* the father in the shape of revenge. Since this aggressiveness is in any case rooted in the sadistic phase of the libido a certain degree of degradation of it is all that is needed to reduce it to the oral stage. This stage, while only adumbrated in Little Hans's fear of being bitten, was blatantly exhibited in the Wolf Man's terror of being devoured. But, besides this, the analysis has demonstrated, beyond a shadow of doubt, the presence of another instinctual impulse of an opposite nature which had succumbed to repression. This was a loving, passive impulse directed towards the father, which had already attained the genital (phallic) level of libidinal organization. As regards the final outcome of the process of repression, this impulse seems, indeed, to have been the more important of the two; it underwent a more far-reaching regression and had a decisive influence upon the content of

the phobia. In following up a single current of instinctual repression we have thus come upon a confluence of two. The two instinctual impulses that have been overtaken by repression—sadistic aggressiveness towards the father and passive affection for him—form a pair of opposites. Furthermore, a full comprehension of Little Hans's case shows that the formation of his phobia had had the effect of abolishing his affectionate object-cathexis of his mother as well, though the actual content of his phobia betrayed no sign of it. The process of repression had attacked almost all the components of his Oedipus complex—both his hostile and his tender impulses towards his father and his tender impulses towards his mother. In my Russian patient this state of affairs was much less patent.

These are unwelcome complications, considering that we only set out to study simple cases of symptom-formation and with that intention selected the earliest and, to all appearances, most transparent neuroses of childhood. Instead of a single repression we have found a collection of them and have become involved with regression into the bargain. Perhaps we



have added to the confusion by treating the two cases of animal phobia at our disposal—Little Hans and the Wolf Man—as though they were cast in the same mould. As a matter of fact, certain differences between them stand out. It is only with regard to Little Hans that we can positively assert that what his phobia disposed of were the two main impulses of the Oedipus complex, viz., his aggressiveness towards his father and his over-fondness for his mother. A tender feeling for his father was undoubtedly there too and played a part in repressing the opposite feeling; but we can prove neither that it was strong enough to draw repression upon itself nor that it subsided after his phobia appeared. Hans seems, in fact, to have been a normal boy with what is called a ‘positive’ Oedipus complex. It is possible that those factors which seem not to have been present were actually at work in him, but we cannot demonstrate their existence. Even the most exhaustive analysis has gaps in its data and is insufficiently documented. In the case of the Wolf Man something different is lacking. His attitude to female objects had been disturbed by an early seduction and his passive, feminine

side was strongly developed. The analysis of his wolf-dream revealed very little intentional aggressiveness towards his father, but it brought forward unmistakable proof that his passive tender attitude to his father had been overtaken by repression. In his case, too, the other factors may have been operative as well; but they were not visible. How is it that, whereas these differences between the two cases almost amount to an antithesis, the final outcome—a phobia—was approximately the same? The answer must be sought in another quarter. I think it will be found in the second fact which emerges from our brief comparative examination. It seems to me that in both cases we can detect what the motive force of the repression was and can substantiate our view of its nature from the line of development which the two children subsequently pursued. This motive force was identical in both. It was the fear of impending castration. Little Hans gave up his aggressiveness towards his father from fear of being castrated. His fear that a horse would bite him can easily be extended into meaning a fear that a horse would bite off his genitals, would castrate him. But it was from fear of being cas-

trated, too, that the little Russian relinquished his desire to be loved by his father, for he thought that a relation of that sort presupposed a sacrifice of his genitals—of the organ which distinguished him from women. As we see, both forms of the Oedipus complex, the normal, active form and the inverted one, are broken down by the castration complex. The Russian boy's anxiety-idea of being eaten up by a wolf contained, it is true, no suggestion of castration, for the oral regression it had undergone had removed it too far from the phallic stage. But the analysis of his dream rendered further proof superfluous. It was a triumph of repression that the form in which his phobia was expressed should no longer have contained any allusion to castration.

So now we have made the unexpected discovery that in both patients the motive force of the repression was fear of castration. The ideational content of their anxiety—being bitten by a horse and being eaten up by a wolf—was a substitute by distortion for the idea of being castrated by their father. It was this idea which had undergone repression. In the Russian boy the idea was an expression of a desire which

was not able to subsist in the face of his masculine revolt; in Little Hans it was the expression of a reaction in him which had turned his aggressiveness into its opposite. But the *affect* of anxiety, which was the essence of their phobia, came, not from the process of repression, not from the libidinal cathexes of the repressed impulses, but from the repressing agency itself. The anxiety belonging to the animal phobias was an untransformed fear of castration. It was therefore an objective fear, a fear of a danger which actually was imminent or believed to be so. It was anxiety which produced repression and not, as I formerly believed, repression which produced anxiety.

I cannot deny the fact, though it is not pleasant to recall it, that I have on many occasions asserted that in repression the psychical representative of the instinct is distorted, displaced, etc., while the libido belonging to the instinctual impulse is transformed into anxiety. But now an examination of phobias, which should be best able to provide confirmatory evidence, fails to bear out my assertion. The anxiety felt in animal phobias is the castration anxiety of the ego; while the anxiety felt in agoraphobia (a

subject that has been less thoroughly studied) seems to be a fear of incurring sexual temptation—a fear which, after all, must be connected in its origins with the fear of castration. As far as can be seen at present, the majority of phobias go back to an anxiety of this kind felt by the ego in regard to the demands of the libido. It is always the ego's attitude of anxiety which is the primary thing and which sets repression going. Anxiety never arises from repressed libido. If I had formerly been content to say that after the occurrence of repression there appeared, in place of the manifestation of libido that was to be expected, a certain amount of anxiety, I should have nothing to retract to-day. The description would be correct; and there does undoubtedly exist a correspondence of the kind asserted between the strength of the impulse that has to be repressed and the intensity of the resultant anxiety. But I must admit that I thought I was giving more than a mere description. I believed I had put my finger on a metapsychological process of direct transformation of libido into anxiety. I can now no longer maintain this view. And, indeed, I found it impossible at the time to explain

how a transformation of that kind was carried out.

It may be asked how I arrived at this idea of transformation in the first instance. It was while I was studying the actual neuroses, at a time when analysis was still a very long way from distinguishing between processes in the ego and processes in the id. I found that outbreaks of anxiety and a general state of anxiety-preparedness were produced by certain sexual practices such as *coitus interruptus*, undischarged sexual excitement or enforced abstinence—that is, whenever sexual excitement was inhibited, arrested or deflected in its progress towards gratification. Since sexual excitement was an expression of libidinal instinctual impulses it did not seem too rash to assume that the libido was turned into anxiety through the agency of these disturbances. The observations which I made at the time still hold good. Moreover, it cannot be denied that the libido belonging to the id-processes is subjected to interruption at the instigation of repression. We can still maintain, therefore, that in repression anxiety is produced from the libidinal cathexes of the instinctual impulses. But how can we

reconcile this conclusion with our other conclusion that the anxiety felt in phobias is an ego anxiety and arises in the ego, and that it does not proceed out of repression but, on the contrary, sets repression in motion? There seems to be a contradiction here which is not at all simple to solve. It will not be easy to reduce the two sources of anxiety to a single one. We might attempt to do so by supposing that, when coitus is disturbed or sexual excitement interrupted or abstinence enforced, the ego scents certain dangers to which it reacts with anxiety. But this takes us nowhere. On the other hand, our analysis of the phobias seems to admit of no correction. *Non liquet.*

## CHAPTER V

WE set out to study the formation of symptoms and the secondary struggle waged by the ego against symptoms. But in picking on the phobias for this purpose we have clearly made an unlucky choice. The anxiety which predominates in them appears to complicate and obscure the picture. There are plenty of neuroses which exhibit no anxiety whatever. True conversion-hysteria is one of these. Even in its most severe symptoms no admixture of anxiety is found. This fact alone ought to warn us against making too close a connection between anxiety and symptom-formation. The phobias are so closely akin to conversion-hysteria in every other respect that I have felt justified in classing them with it under the name of 'anxiety-hysteria'. But no one has as yet been able to say what it is that determines whether any given case shall take the form of a conversion-hysteria or a phobia—has been able, that is to say, to establish how



the production of anxiety in hysteria is conditioned.

The commonest symptoms of conversion-hysteria—motor paralyses, contractures, involuntary actions or discharges, pains and hallucinations—are cathectic processes which are either permanently maintained or intermittent. But this puts fresh difficulties in the way. Not much is actually known about these symptoms. Analysis can show what the disturbed excitatory process is which the symptoms replace. It usually turns out that they themselves have a share in that process. It is as though they had concentrated in themselves the whole energy of the process. For instance, it will be found that the pains from which a patient suffers were present in the situation in which the repression occurred; or that his hallucination was, at that time, a perception; or that his motor paralysis stands for a defence against an action which he had meant to perform but which had been inhibited; or that his contracture is usually a displacement of an intended innervation of the muscles in some other part of his body; or that his convulsions are the equivalent of an outburst of affect which

has been withdrawn from the normal control of the ego. The sensation of unpleasure which accompanies the appearance of the symptoms varies in a striking degree. In chronic symptoms which have been displaced on to motility, like paralyses and contractures, it is almost always entirely absent; the ego behaves towards the symptoms as though it had nothing to do with them. In intermittent symptoms and in those concerned with the sensory field unpleasure is as a rule distinctly felt; and in symptoms of pain it may reach an extreme degree. The picture presented is so manifold that it is difficult to discover the factor which permits of all these variations and yet establishes a uniformity in them. There is, moreover, little to be seen in conversion-hysteria of the ego's struggle against the symptom after it has been formed. It is only when sensitivity to pain in some part of the body constitutes the symptom that that symptom is in a position to play a dual rôle. In that case the symptom of pain will appear no less regularly whenever the part of the body concerned is touched from outside than when the pathogenic situation which it represents is associatively activated from within; and the

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ego will take precautions to prevent the symptom from being aroused through external perceptions. Why the formation of symptoms in conversion-hysteria should be such a peculiarly obscure thing I do not know; but the fact provides us with a good reason for quitting such an unproductive field of enquiry.

Let us turn to the obsessional neuroses in the hope of learning more about the formation of symptoms. The symptoms belonging to this neurosis fall, in general, into two groups, each having an opposite bias. They are either prohibitions, precautions and expiations—that is, negative in character—or they are substitutive gratifications often appearing in symbolic disguise. The negative, defensive group of symptoms is the more primary of the two; but as the illness is prolonged the gratificatory group, overriding all defensive measures, gains the upper hand. The symptom-formation scores a triumph if it succeeds in combining the two by joining to what was originally a defensive command or prohibition the significance of a gratification; and in order to achieve this end it will often make use of the most ingenious associative paths. Such an achievement demon-

strates the tendency of the ego to synthetization which it has already been seen to possess. In extreme cases the patient manages to make most of his symptoms have, in addition to their original meaning, a directly contrary one. This is a tribute to the power of ambivalence, which, no one knows why, plays such a large part in obsessional neuroses. In the crudest instance the symptom has two phases: an action which carries out a certain injunction is immediately succeeded by another action which stops or undoes the first one even if it does not go quite so far as to carry out its opposite.

Two impressions at once emerge from this brief survey of obsessional symptoms. The first is that a ceaseless struggle is being waged against the repressed, in which the repressing forces steadily lose ground; the second is that the ego and the super-ego have a specially large share in the formation of the symptoms.

Obsessional neurosis is unquestionably the most interesting and repaying subject of analytic research. But as a problem it has not yet been mastered. It must be confessed that, if we endeavour to penetrate more deeply into its nature we still have to rely upon doubtful

assumptions and unconfirmed suppositions. Obsessional neurosis originates, no doubt, in the same situation as hysteria, namely, the necessity of warding off the libidinal demands of the Oedipus complex. Indeed, every obsessional neurosis seems to have a substratum of hysterical symptoms that have been formed at a very early stage. But it is subsequently shaped along quite different lines owing to a constitutional factor. The genital organization of the libido turns out to be weak and insufficiently resistant, so that when the ego begins its defensive actions the first thing it succeeds in doing is to throw back, in part or altogether, the genital organization (of the phallic phase) on to the earlier sadistic-anal level. This phenomenon of regression is decisive for all that follows.

Another possibility has to be considered. Perhaps regression is the result not of a constitutional factor but of a time-factor. It may be that regression is rendered possible not because the genital organization of the libido is too weak but because the opposition of the ego begins too early, while the sadistic phase is at its height. I am not prepared to express an

absolute opinion on this point, but I may say that analytic observation does not speak in favour of such an assumption. It rather tends to show that by the time an obsessional neurosis begins to show itself the phallic stage has already been attained. Moreover, the onset of this neurosis belongs to a later time of life than that of hysteria. It sets in in the second period of childhood, with the latency period. In a patient whose case I was able to study and who was overtaken by this disorder at a very late date it became clear that the determining cause of his regression and of the emergence of his obsessional neurosis was a real occurrence that impaired a genital life which had up till then been intact.

As regards a metapsychological explanation of regression I am inclined to find it in a 'defusion of instinct', in a detachment of the erotic components which, at the beginning of the genital stage, had become joined to the destructive cathexes belonging to the sadistic phase.

In bringing regression about, the ego scores the first point in its defensive struggle against the demands of the libido. In this connection we



shall find it advantageous to distinguish the more general notion of 'defence' from 'repression'. Repression is only one of the mechanisms which defence makes use of. It is perhaps in obsessional cases more than in normal or hysterical ones that we can most clearly recognize that the motive force of defence is the castration complex and that what is being warded off are the trends of the Oedipus complex. We are at present dealing with the beginning of the latency period, a period which is characterized by the passing away of the Oedipus complex, the creation or consolidation of the super-ego and the erection of ethical and aesthetic barriers in the ego. In obsessional neuroses these processes are carried further than is normal. In order to effect the destruction of the Oedipus complex a regressive degradation of the libido takes place as well, the super-ego becomes exceptionally severe and unkind, and the ego, in obedience to the super-ego, produces strong reaction-formations in the shape of conscientiousness, pity and cleanliness. Implacable, though not therefore always successful, severity is shown in putting down the temptation to continue early infantile

masturbation which is now attached to regressive (sadistic-anal) ideational images but which still represents the unsubjugated part of the phallic organization. There is an inherent contradiction about this state of affairs, in which, precisely in the interests of masculinity (castration anxiety), every activity belonging to masculinity is stopped. But here, too, obsessional neurosis is only overdoing the normal method of abolishing the Oedipus complex. We once more find an illustration of the truth that every exaggeration contains the seed of its own destruction. For, under the guise of obsessional acts, the masturbation that has been suppressed approaches ever more closely to gratification.

The reaction-formations in the ego of the obsessional neurotic, which we have recognized as exaggerations of normal character-formation, should be regarded, I think, as yet another mechanism of defence and placed on the same level as regression and repression. They seem to be absent or very much weaker in hysteria. Looking back, we can now get an idea of what is peculiar to the defensive process in hysteria. It seems that in it the process is limited to repression alone. The ego turns away from the

disagreeable instinctual impulse and leaves it to pursue its course in the unconscious, taking no further part in its lot. This view cannot be absolutely correct, for we are acquainted with the case in which a hysterical symptom is at the same time a fulfilment of a penalty imposed by the super-ego; but it may describe a general characteristic of the behaviour of the ego in hysteria.

We can either simply accept it as a fact that in obsessional neurosis a super-ego of this severe kind emerges, or we can take the regression of the libido as the fundamental characteristic of the affection and attempt to relate the severity of the super-ego to it. And indeed, the super-ego, originating as it does in the id, cannot dissociate itself from the regression and defusion of instinct which have taken place there. We cannot be surprised if it becomes harsher, unkindier and more tormenting than where development has been normal.

The chief task during the latency period seems to be the warding off of the temptation to masturbate. This struggle produces a series of symptoms which appear in a typical fashion

in the most different individuals and which bear the general character of ceremonial. It is a great pity that no one has as yet collected them and systematically analysed them. Being the earliest products of the neurosis they should best be able to shed light on the mechanisms employed in its symptom-formation. They already exhibit those features which are destined to come to the fore so fatefully in the serious illness that lies ahead—the manner in which the symptoms are introduced into certain procedures (which later on become almost automatic) in connection with going to sleep, washing, dressing and walking about, as well as the tendency to repetition and delay. Why this should be so is at present not at all clear; but the sublimation of anal-erotic components plays an unmistakable part.

The advent of puberty opens a new chapter in the history of an obsessional neurosis. The organization at the genital level which has been stopped in childhood starts again with great vigour. But, as we know, the sexual development of the child determines what direction this new start will take. Not only will the early aggressive impulses be reawakened; but a greater

or lesser proportion of the new libidinal impulses—in bad cases the whole of them—will have to follow the course prescribed for them by regression and will emerge as aggressive and destructive tendencies. In consequence of the erotic trends being disguised in this way and owing to the powerful reaction-formations in the ego, the struggle against sexuality will henceforward be carried on under the banner of ethical principles. The ego will recoil with astonishment from promptings to cruelty and violence which enter consciousness from the id, and it has no notion that in them it is combating erotic wishes, including many which it would otherwise not have taken exception to. The super-ego, overstrict as it is, insists all the more strongly on the suppression of sexuality, seeing that the latter has assumed such repulsive forms. Thus in obsessional neurosis the conflict is aggravated in two directions: the defensive forces become more intolerant and the forces that are to be kept off more intolerable. Both effects are due to one factor, namely, regression of the libido.

Much of what has been said may be objected to on the ground that the unpleasant obsessive

ideas are themselves conscious. But there is no doubt that before becoming conscious they have been through a process of repression. In most of them the actual text of the aggressive instinctual impulse is altogether unknown to the ego, and it requires a good deal of analytic work to make it conscious. What does penetrate into consciousness is usually only a distorted substitute which is either of a vague, dream-like and confused nature or so travestied as to be unrecognizable. Even where repression has not encroached upon the content of the aggressive impulse it has certainly abolished its accompanying affective quality, with the result that the aggressiveness appears to the ego not to be an impulsion but, as the patients themselves say, merely an 'idea' which awakens no feeling. But the remarkable thing is that this is not the case. What happens is that the affect which has been left out when the obsessional idea is perceived appears in a different place. The super-ego behaves as though repression had not occurred and as though it knew the real formulation and full affective quality of the aggressive impulse, and it treats the ego accordingly. The ego which, on the one hand,

knows that it is innocent must, on the other, accept a sense of guilt and carry a responsibility which it cannot account for. This state of affairs is, however, not so puzzling as it would seem at first sight. The behaviour of the super-ego is perfectly intelligible, and the contradiction in the ego merely shows that it has shut out the id by means of repression while remaining fully accessible to the influence of the super-ego.<sup>1</sup> If it is asked why the ego does not also attempt to withdraw itself from the painful criticism of the super-ego the simple answer is that it does manage to do so in a great number of instances. There are obsessional neuroses in which no sense of guilt whatever is present. In them, as far as can be seen, the ego has avoided becoming aware of it by instituting a new set of symptoms, penances or restrictions of a self-punishing kind. These symptoms represent at the same time a gratification of masochistic impulses which, in their turn, have been reinforced by regression.

Obsessional neurosis presents such a vast multiplicity of phenomena that we have never

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Theodor Reik, *Geständniszwang und Strafbedürfnis*, 1925, p. 51.

yet succeeded in making a coherent synthesis of all its variations. All we can do is to pick out certain typical correlations; but there is always the risk that we may have overlooked other uniformities of a no less important kind.

I have already described the general tendency of symptom-formation in obsessional neurosis. It is to give ever greater room to substitutive gratification at the expense of frustration. Symptoms which once stood for a restriction of the ego come later on to represent gratifications as well, thanks to the ego's inclination to synthesize, and it is quite clear that this second meaning gradually becomes the more important of the two. The result of this process, which approximates more and more to a complete failure of the original purpose of defence, is an extremely restricted ego which is reduced to seeking gratification in the symptoms. The displacement of the distribution of forces in favour of gratification may have the alarming outcome of paralysing the will of the ego, so that in every decision that it has to make it is almost as strongly impelled from the one side as from the other. The acute conflict between id and super-ego which has dominated



the illness from the very beginning may assume such extensive proportions that the ego, unable to carry out its office of mediator, can undertake nothing which is not drawn into the sphere of that conflict.

## CHAPTER VI

IN the course of these struggles two activities of the ego of a symptom-forming kind are observable, which deserve special attention because they are obviously surrogates of repression and therefore well suited to illustrate its purpose and technique. The fact that such auxiliary and substitutive techniques emerge may argue that true repression has met with difficulties in its functioning. If one considers how much more the ego is the scene of action of symptom-formation in obsessional neurosis than it is in hysteria and with what tenacity it clings to its relations to reality, employing all its intellectual faculties to that end—so much so that the very process of thinking becomes hyper-cathected and eroticized—then one may perhaps get a closer idea of the importance of these variations of repression.

The two techniques I refer to are *undoing what has been done* and *isolating*. The first of these has a wide range of application and goes

back very far. It is, as it were, a negative magic, and endeavours, by means of motor symbolism, to 'blow away' not merely the consequence of some occurrence, experience or impression, but those very events themselves. I choose the term 'blow away' advisedly, so as to remind the reader of the part played by this technique not only in neuroses but in magical acts, popular customs and religious ceremonies as well. In obsessional neurosis we first come across the technique of undoing what has been done in symptoms which occur in two phases—*dichronous* symptoms—in which one action is cancelled out by a second, so that it is as though neither action had taken place, whereas, in reality, both have. This aim of undoing is the second underlying motive of obsessional ceremonials, the first being to take precautions in order to prevent the occurrence or recurrence of some given event. The difference between the two is easily seen: the precautionary measures are rational, whilst the measures taken to abolish something by undoing it are irrational and magical. It is of course to be suspected that the latter is the earlier motive of the two and proceeds from an animistic

attitude towards the environment. This endeavour to undo shades off into normal behaviour in the case in which a person decides to regard an event as not having happened. But whereas he will take no direct steps against the event, and will simply look away from it and its consequences, the neurotic person will try to make the past itself non-existent. He will try to repress it by motor means. The same aim may perhaps be present in and account for the compulsion to repeat actions which is so frequently met with in obsessional neuroses and which serves a number of contradictory purposes at once. When anything has not happened in the desired way it can be undone by being repeated in a different way; and now all the motives that exist for lingering over such repetitions come into play as well. As the neurosis proceeds we often find that one symptom-forming motive of first-rate importance is the endeavour to undo a traumatic experience. We thus unexpectedly discover a new, motor technique of defence, or (as we may say in this case with less inaccuracy) of repression.

The second of these techniques that we are setting out to describe for the first time, that

of isolation, is characteristic for obsessional neurosis. It, too, takes place in the motor sphere. When the subject has done something which has a significance for his neurosis, or after something unpleasant has happened, he will interpolate an interval during which nothing further may happen—during which he may perceive nothing and do nothing. This behaviour, which seems so strange at first sight, is soon seen to have a relation to repression. We know that in hysteria a traumatic experience is able to be overtaken by amnesia. In obsessional neurosis this can often not be achieved. But instead of being forgotten the experience is deprived of its affect, and its associative connections are suppressed or interrupted so that it remains as though isolated and is not reproduced in the ordinary processes of thought. The effect of isolation is thus the same as the effect of repression with amnesia. This technique is, then, carried out in the isolations of obsessional neurosis. It is at the same time reinforced in a magical sense from the motor sphere. The elements that are held apart in this way are precisely those which belong together associatively. Motor isolation is meant

to ensure an interruption of the connection in thought. The normal phenomenon of concentration provides a pretext for this kind of neurotic procedure. The normal person concentrates on what seems to him important in the way of an impression or a piece of work in order that it shall not be interfered with by the intrusion of any other mental processes or activities. But even he uses concentration to keep away not only what is irrelevant or unimportant to the matter in hand, but, above all, what is unsuitable because it is contradictory. He is most disturbed by those elements which once belonged to it but which have been discarded in the course of his development—as, for instance, by any manifestation of the ambivalence belonging to his father complex in his relation to God, or by any impulses attached to his excretory organs in his emotions of love. Thus, in the normal course of things, the ego has a great deal of isolating work to do in its function of directing the current of thought. And, as we know, in carrying out our analytic technique we have to train it to relinquish that function, eminently justified as it is in itself, for the time being.

All analysts have found that it is especially difficult for the obsessional neurotic to carry out the fundamental rule of psycho-analytic treatment. Probably his ego is more watchful and makes sharper isolations because of the high degree of tension due to conflict that exists between his super-ego and his id. While his thoughts are working, his ego has to keep off too much in the way of an intrusion of unconscious phantasies or a manifestation of ambivalent trends. It must not relax, but is constantly prepared for a struggle. It fortifies its compulsion to concentrate and to isolate by the help of those magical acts of isolation which, in the form of symptoms, grow to be so noticeable and to have so much practical importance for the patient, but which are actually, of course, useless and in the nature of ceremonials.

But in thus endeavouring to prevent associations and connections of thought the ego is obeying one of the oldest and most fundamental commands of obsessional neurosis, the taboo of touching. If one asks oneself why the avoidance of touching, contact or contamination should play such a large part in this neurosis and should become the subject-matter of com-

plicated systems, the answer is that touching and physical contact are the immediate aim of the aggressive as well as the loving object-cathexes. Eros desires contact because it strives to make the ego and the loved object one, to abolish all barriers of distance between them. But the first requisite of destructiveness, too, which (before the invention of long-range weapons) can only take effect at close quarters, is physical contact, a coming to grips. To 'touch' a woman has become a euphemism for using her as a sexual object. Not to 'touch' one's genitals is the phrase employed for forbidding auto-erotic gratification. Since obsessional neurosis begins by persecuting touching in its erotic sense and then, after regression has taken place, goes on to persecute it in its new sense of aggressiveness, nothing is so strongly proscribed in this illness as touching nor so well suited to become the central point of a system of prohibitions. Now, to isolate a thing is to banish the possibility of its being touched, to withdraw it from any sort of contact. When a neurotic isolates an impression or an activity by interpolating an interval, he lets it be understood symbolically that he will not allow his thoughts



about that impression or activity to come into associative contact with his other thoughts.

This is as far as our investigations into the formation of symptoms take us. It is hardly worth while summing them up, for the results they have yielded are scanty and incomplete and tell us scarcely anything that we do not already know. It would be fruitless to turn our attention to symptom-formation in other disorders besides phobias, conversion-hysteria and obsessional neurosis, for too little is known about them. But in reviewing those three neuroses together we are brought up against a very serious problem the consideration of which can no longer be put off. All three have as their starting-point the destruction of the Oedipus complex; and in all three the motive force of the ego's opposition is, we believe, the fear of castration. Yet it is only in the phobias that this fear comes to the surface and is acknowledged as such. What has become of it in the other two neuroses? How has the ego spared itself this fear? The problem becomes accentuated when we recollect the possibility, already referred to, that anxiety arises directly, by a kind of fermentation, as it were, from a libidinal

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cathexis whose processes have been disturbed. Furthermore, is it absolutely certain that fear of castration is the only motive force of repression or defence? If we think of neuroses in women we are bound to doubt it. For though we can with certainty establish in them the presence of a castration *complex*, we can hardly speak with propriety of castration *anxiety* where castration has already taken place.

## CHAPTER VII

LET us go back again to infantile phobias of animals; for we still know more about them than any others. In animal phobias, then, the ego has to oppose a libidinal object-cathexis coming from the id—a cathexis that belongs either to the positive or the negative Oedipus complex—because it believes that to give way to it would entail the danger of castration. This question has already been discussed, but there still remains a doubtful point to clear up. In Little Hans's case—that is, in the case of a positive Oedipus complex—was it his fondness for his mother or was it his aggressiveness towards his father which called out the defence of the ego? In practice it seems to make no difference, especially as each set of feelings implies the other; but the question has a theoretical interest, since it is only the feeling of affection for the mother which can count as a purely erotic one. The aggressive impulse flows mainly from the instinct of destruction;

and we have always believed that in a neurosis it is against the demands of the libido and not against those of any other instinct that the ego is defending itself. In point of fact we know that after Hans's phobia had been formed his tender attachment to his mother seemed to disappear, having been completely disposed of by repression, while the symptom-formation (substitutive formation) took place in relation to his aggressive impulses. In the Wolf Man the situation was simpler. The impulse that was repressed was his feminine attitude towards his father, and that attitude was a genuinely erotic one. And it was in relation to that impulse, too, that the formation of his symptoms took place.

It is almost humiliating that, after working so long, we should still be having difficulty in understanding the most fundamental facts. But we are determined to simplify nothing and to hide nothing. If we cannot see things clearly we will at least see clearly what the obscurities are. What is hampering us here is evidently some hitch in the development of our theory of the instincts. We began by tracing the organization of the libido through its successive

stages—from the oral through the sadistic-anal to the genital—and in doing so placed all the components of the sexual instinct on the same footing. Later it appeared that sadism was the representative of another instinct which was opposed to Eros. This new view, that the instincts fell into two groups, seems to explode the earlier view of the successive stages of libidinal organization. But we do not have to break fresh ground in order to find a way out of the difficulty. The solution has been at hand for a long time and consists in the fact that what we are concerned with are scarcely ever pure instinctual impulses but mixtures in various proportions of the two groups of instincts. If this is so, there is no need to revise our view of the organizations of the libido. A sadistic cathexis of an object may legitimately claim to be treated as a libidinal one; and an aggressive impulse against the father can just as well be subjected to repression as a loving impulse towards the mother. Nevertheless we shall bear in mind for future consideration the possibility that repression is a process which has a special relation to the genital organization of the libido and that the ego resorts to other

methods of defence when it has to secure itself against the libido on other levels of organization. A case like Little Hans's does not enable us to come to any clear conclusion. It is true that in him an aggressive impulse had been disposed of by repression, but this happened after the genital organization had been attained.

This time we will keep our attention on the question of anxiety. We have said that as soon as the ego recognized the danger of castration it gave the signal of anxiety and inhibited through the pleasure-unpleasure system (in a way which we cannot as yet understand more fully) the impending cathectic process in the id. At the same time the phobia became formed; and now the castration anxiety was directed to a different object and expressed in a distorted form, so that the patient was afraid, not of being castrated by his father, but of being bitten by a horse or eaten by a wolf. This substitutive formation had two obvious advantages. In the first place it avoided a conflict due to ambivalence (for the father had been a loved object, too), and in the second place it enabled the ego to cease producing anxiety.

For the anxiety belonging to a phobia is conditional; it only emerges when the object of it is perceived, and rightly so, since it is only then that the danger-situation is present. There is no need to be afraid of being castrated by a father who is not there. On the other hand one cannot get rid of a father; he can appear whenever he chooses. But if he is replaced by an animal all one has to do is to avoid the sight of it—that is, its presence—in order to be free from danger and anxiety. Little Hans, therefore, imposed a restriction upon his ego. He produced the inhibition of not leaving the house so as not to come across any horses. The young Russian had an even easier time of it, for it was hardly a privation for him not to look at a particular picture-book any more. If his naughty sister had not always been showing him the book with the picture of the wolf standing upright in it he would have been able to feel safe from his fears.

On a previous occasion I have stated that phobias have the character of a projection in that they replace an internal, instinctual danger by an external, perceptual one. The advantage of doing this comes from the fact that the in-

dividual can protect himself against external dangers by fleeing from them and avoiding the perception of them, whereas it is useless to try to flee from dangers that arise from within. This statement of mine was not incorrect, but it did not go below the surface of things. For an instinctual demand is, after all, not dangerous in itself; it only becomes so inasmuch as it entails a real external danger, the danger of castration. Thus what happens in a phobia in the last resort is merely that one external danger is replaced by another. The view that in a phobia the ego is able to escape anxiety by means of avoidance or inhibitory symptoms fits in with the theory that that anxiety is only an affective signal and that no alteration has taken place in the economic situation.

The anxiety felt in animal phobias is, therefore, an affective reaction on the part of the ego to danger; and the danger which is being signalled in this way is the danger of castration. This anxiety differs in no respect from the anxiety which the ego normally feels in situations of danger except that its content remains unconscious and only becomes conscious in the form of a distortion.



The same is true, I think, of the phobias of grown-up persons, although the material that undergoes modification in their neuroses is much more abundant and there are some additional factors in the formation of the symptoms. Fundamentally the position is identical. The agoraphobic patient imposes a restriction upon his ego so as to escape a certain instinctual danger, namely, the danger of giving way to his erotic desires. For if he did so the danger of being castrated, or some similar danger, would once more be conjured up as it was in his childhood. I may cite as an instance the case of a young man who became agoraphobic because he was afraid of yielding to the solicitations of prostitutes and of contracting a syphilitic infection from them as a punishment.

I am well aware that a great number of cases exhibit a much more complicated structure and that many other repressed instinctual impulses can enter into a phobia. But they are only tributary streams which have for the most part joined the main current of the neurosis at a later stage. The symptomatology of agoraphobia, for example, is complicated by the fact that the ego does not confine itself to making a

renunciation. In order to rob the situation of danger it does more: it usually effects a temporal regression to infancy, or, in extreme cases, to pre-natal days, that is, to a time when the individual was in his mother's womb and protected against the dangers which beset him in the present. A regression of this kind now becomes a condition whose fulfilment exempts the ego from making its renunciation. For instance, an agoraphobic patient may be able to walk in the street provided he is accompanied, like a small child, by someone he knows and trusts; or, for the same reason, he may be able to go out alone provided he remains within a certain distance of his own house and does not go to places which are not familiar to him or where people do not know him. What these stipulations are will depend in each case upon the infantile factors which dominate him through his neurosis. The phobia of being alone is unambiguous in its meaning, irrespective of any infantile regression: it is, ultimately, an endeavour to avoid the temptation to indulge in solitary masturbation. Naturally, infantile regression can only take place when the individual is no longer a child.

A phobia generally sets in only after a first anxiety attack has been experienced in specific circumstances, such as in the street or in a train or in solitude. Thereafter the anxiety is held in ban by the phobia, but it re-emerges whenever the protective stipulation cannot be fulfilled. The mechanism of phobia does good service as a means of defence and tends to be very stable. A continuation of the defensive struggle, in the shape of a struggle against the symptom, occurs frequently but not invariably.

What has been said about anxiety in phobias is true of obsessional neuroses as well. In this respect it is not difficult for us to put obsessional neuroses on all fours with phobias. In the former, the mainspring of all later symptom-formation is clearly the ego's fear of the super-ego. The danger-situation from which the ego must get away is the hostility of the super-ego. There is no trace of projection here; the danger is completely internalized. But if we ask ourselves what it is that the ego fears from the super-ego, we cannot but think that the punishment threatened by the latter must be an extension of the punishment of castration. Just as the father has become depersonalized in the

shape of the super-ego, so has the fear of castration at his hands become transformed into an undefined social or moral anxiety. But this anxiety is concealed. The ego escapes it by obediently carrying out the behests, precautions and penances that have been enjoined on it. If it is impeded in doing so it is at once overtaken by an acute feeling of discomfort which may, I think, be regarded as an equivalent of anxiety and which the patients themselves liken to anxiety.

The conclusion we have come to, then, is this. Anxiety is a reaction to a situation of danger. It is obviated by the ego's doing something to avoid that situation or to withdraw from it. It might be said that symptoms are created so as to prevent anxiety from emerging. But this does not go deep enough. It would be truer to say that symptoms are created so as to avoid a danger-situation whose approach has been signalled by the emergence of anxiety. In the cases that we have discussed the danger concerned was the danger of castration or some off-shoot of castration.

If anxiety is a reaction of the ego to danger we shall be tempted to regard the traumatic

neuroses, which so often follow upon a narrow escape from death, as a direct result of a fear of death (or fear *for* life) and to dismiss from our minds the question of castration and the subordinate relations of the ego. Most physicians who observed the traumatic neuroses that occurred during the great war took this line and triumphantly announced that proof was now forthcoming that a threat to the instinct of self-preservation could by itself produce a neurosis without any admixture of sexual factors and without requiring any of the complicated hypotheses of psycho-analysis. It is in fact greatly to be regretted that not a single analysis of a traumatic neurosis of any value is extant. And it is to be regretted, not because such an analysis would contradict the aetiological importance of sexuality—for any such contradiction has long since been disposed of by the introduction of the concept of narcissism which brings the libidinal cathexis of the ego into line with the cathexes of objects and emphasizes the libidinal character of the instinct of self-preservation—but because, in the absence of any analyses of this kind we have lost a precious opportunity of making decisive

discoveries about the relations between anxiety and the formation of symptoms. In view of all that we know about the structure of the comparatively simple neuroses of everyday life it would seem highly improbable that a neurosis could come into being merely because of the objective presence of danger without any participation of the deeper levels of the mental apparatus. But the unconscious seems to contain nothing that would lend substance to the concept of the annihilation of life. Castration can be pictured on the basis of the daily experience of the faeces being separated from the body or on the basis of losing the mother's breast at weaning. But nothing resembling death can ever have been experienced; or if it has, as in fainting, it has left no observable traces behind. I am therefore inclined to adhere to the view that the fear of death should be regarded as analogous to the fear of castration and that the situation to which the ego is reacting is one of being abandoned by the protecting super-ego—the powers of destiny—so that it has no longer any safeguard against all the dangers that surround it. In addition it must be remembered that in those experiences

which lead to a traumatic neurosis the protective barrier against external stimuli has been broken through and over-great quantities of excitation impinge upon the mental apparatus; so that we have here the second possibility, that anxiety is not only being signalled as an affect but is also being created anew out of the economic conditions of the situation.

The statement I have just made to the effect that the ego has been prepared to expect castration by having undergone constantly repeated object-losses places the question of anxiety in a new light. We have hitherto regarded it as an affective signal of danger. But now, since the danger is so often one of castration it appears to us as a reaction to a loss, a separation. Even though many considerations immediately arise which make against this view we cannot but be struck by one very remarkable correlation. The first experience of anxiety through which the individual goes is (in the case of human beings, at all events) birth, and, objectively speaking, birth is a separation from the mother. It can be compared to a castration of the mother (by equating the child with a penis). Now it would be very satisfactory if

anxiety, as a symbol of separation, were to be repeated on every subsequent occasion on which a separation took place. But unfortunately we are prevented from making use of this correlation by the fact that birth is not experienced subjectively as a separation from the mother, since the foetus, being a completely narcissistic creature, is totally unaware of her existence as an object. Another adverse argument is that we know what the affective reactions to separation are: they are pain and mourning, not anxiety. Incidentally, it may be remembered that in discussing the question of mourning<sup>1</sup> we also failed to discover why it should be such a painful thing.

<sup>1</sup> [Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia' (1917), *Collected Papers*, vol. iv.]



## CHAPTER VIII

THE time has come to pause and reflect. What we clearly want is some idea of what anxiety really is, some criterion that will enable us to distinguish true statements about it from false ones. But this is not easy to get. Anxiety is not so simple as all that. Up till now we have arrived at nothing but contradictory views about it, none of which can, to the unprejudiced eye, be given preference over the other. I therefore propose to adopt a different procedure. I propose to assemble, quite impartially, all the facts that we do know about anxiety and to give up the idea of making any immediate synthesis of them.

Anxiety, then, is in the first place something that is felt. We call it an affective state, although we are also ignorant of what an affect is. As a feeling, anxiety has a very marked quality of unpleasure. But that is not the whole of its quality. Not every unpleasure is anxiety, for there are other sensations, such as tension,

pain or mourning which have the quality of unpleasure. Thus anxiety must have other distinctive features besides this quality. Can we succeed in finding out what the differences are between these various unpleasurable affects?

We can at any rate note one or two things about the feeling of anxiety. Its unpleasurable quality seems to have a character of its own—something not very obvious, whose presence is difficult to prove yet which is in all likelihood there. But besides having this special character which is difficult to isolate, we notice that anxiety is accompanied by fairly definite physical sensations which can be referred to particular organs of the body. As we are not concerned here with the physiology of anxiety we shall content ourselves with mentioning a few examples of these sensations. The clearest and most frequent ones are those connected with the respiratory organs and with the heart. They provide evidence that motor innervations, *i.e.* processes of discharge, play a part in the general phenomenon of anxiety.

Analysis of anxiety states therefore reveals the existence of (1) a specific quality of unpleasure, (2) acts of discharge and (3) per-

ceptions of those acts. The two last points indicate at once a difference between states of anxiety and other similar states, like those of mourning and pain. The latter do not have any motor manifestation; or if they have, the manifestation is not an integral part of the whole state but is distinct from it as being a result of it or a reaction to it. Anxiety, then, is a special state of unpleasure with acts of discharge along particular channels. In accordance with our general views we should be inclined to think that anxiety is based upon an increase of excitation which on the one hand produces the quality of unpleasure and on the other finds relief through the channels of discharge mentioned above. But a purely physiological account of this sort is scarcely sufficient. We are tempted to assume the presence of a historical factor which binds the sensations of anxiety and its innervations firmly together; in other words, that an anxiety state is the reproduction of some experience which contains the necessary conditions for such an increase of excitation and a discharge along particular channels, and that from this circumstance the unpleasure of anxiety receives its specific

character. In man, birth is a prototypic experience of this kind, and one is therefore inclined to regard anxiety states as a reproduction of the trauma of birth.

This does not imply that anxiety occupies a different position from all the other affective states. In my opinion the other affects are also reproductions of very early, perhaps even pre-individual, experiences of vital importance; and I should be inclined to regard them as universal, typical and innate hysterical attacks, comparable with the recently and individually acquired attacks which occur in hysterical neuroses and whose origin and significance as memory symbols have been revealed by analysis. Of course it would be very desirable to be able to demonstrate the truth of this view in a number of such affects—a thing which is still very far from being the case.

Certain immediate objections to this view that anxiety goes back to the event of birth have to be met. It may be argued that anxiety is a reaction which, in all probability, is common to every organism, certainly every organism of a higher order, whereas birth is only experienced by the mammals; and it is doubtful whether in

all of them, even, birth amounts to a trauma. Therefore there can be anxiety without the prototype of birth. But this objection takes us beyond the barrier that divides psychology from biology. It may be precisely because anxiety has an indispensable biological function to fulfil as a reaction to a state of danger that it is differently fashioned in different living beings. We do not know, besides, whether anxiety involves the same sensations and innervations in creatures far removed from man as it does in man himself. Thus there is no good argument here against the view that, in man, anxiety is modelled upon the process of birth.

If the structure and origin of anxiety are as described, the next question is, what is the function of anxiety and on what occasions is it reproduced? The answer seems to be obvious and convincing: anxiety arose originally as a reaction to a state of danger and it is reproduced whenever a state of that kind recurs.

This answer, however, raises further considerations. The innervations involved in the original state of anxiety probably had a meaning and purpose, just as have the muscular move-

ments which accompany a first hysterical attack. In order to understand a hysterical attack all one has to do is to look for a situation in which the movements in question would form part of an appropriate and expedient action. Thus in birth it is probable that the innervations, in being directed to the respiratory organs, are preparing the way for the activity of the lungs, and that in accelerating the heart-beat they are helping to keep the blood free from toxic substances. Naturally, when the anxiety state is reproduced later on as an affect it will be lacking in any such expediency, just as the repetitions of a hysterical attack are. When the individual is placed in a new situation of danger it may well be quite inexpedient for him to respond with an anxiety state (which is a reaction to an earlier danger) instead of initiating a reaction which is appropriate to the present danger. But his behaviour may become expedient once more if he recognizes the danger-situation before it has actually overtaken him and signals its approach by an outbreak of anxiety. In that case he can at once get rid of his anxiety by having recourse to more suitable measures. Thus we see that there

are two ways in which anxiety can emerge: in an inexpedient way, when a new situation of danger has occurred, or in an expedient way in order to give a signal and prevent such a situation from occurring.

But what is a 'danger'? In the act of birth there is a real danger to life. We know what this means objectively; but what it means in a psychological sense we have no idea. The danger of birth has as yet no mental content for the subject. One cannot possibly suppose that the foetus has any sort of knowledge that its life is in danger of being destroyed. It can only be aware of some vast upheaval in the economy of its narcissistic libido. Very large quantities of excitation crowd in upon it, giving rise to new sensations of unpleasure, and many organs acquire an increased cathexis, thus foreshadowing the object-cathexis which will soon set in. What elements in all this can be considered to be distinctive of a 'danger-situation'?

Unfortunately far too little is known about the mental constitution of the new-born child to make a direct answer possible. I cannot even vouch for the validity of the description I have

just given. It is easy to say that the baby will repeat its affect of anxiety in every situation which recalls the event of birth. The important thing to know is what it is that recalls that event and what it is in that event that is recalled.

All we can do is to examine the occasions on which infants or rather older children show readiness to produce anxiety. In his book on the trauma of birth<sup>1</sup> Rank has made a determined attempt to establish a relationship between the earliest phobias of children and the impressions made on them by the event of birth. But I do not think he has been successful. His theory is open to two objections. In the first place, he assumes that the infant has received certain sensory impressions, in particular of a visual kind, at the time of birth, the renewal of which can recall to its memory the trauma of birth and thus evoke a reaction of anxiety. This assumption is quite unfounded and extremely improbable. It is not credible that a child should retain any but tactile and general sensations relating to the process of birth. If, later on, children show fear of small

<sup>1</sup> Rank, *The Trauma of Birth and its Importance for Psycho-Analytic Therapy* (1924).



animals that disappear into holes or emerge from them, this reaction, according to Rank, is due to their perceiving an analogy. But it is an analogy of which they cannot be aware. In the second place, in considering these later anxiety-situations Rank dwells, according as it suits him best, now on the child's recollection of its happy intra-uterine existence, now on its recollection of the traumatic disturbance which interrupted that existence; so that he is able to make almost any interpretation he pleases. There are, moreover, certain examples of childhood anxiety which directly traverse his theory. When, for instance, a child is left alone in the dark one would expect it, according to his view, to welcome the re-establishment of the intra-uterine situation; yet it is precisely on such occasions that the child reacts with anxiety. And if this is explained by saying that the child is being reminded of the interruption which the event of birth made in its intra-uterine happiness, then one can no longer shut one's eyes to the far-fetched character of such explanations.

I am driven to the conclusion that the earliest phobias of infancy cannot be directly

traced back to impressions of birth and that so far they have not been explained. A certain preparedness for anxiety is undoubtedly present in the infant. But this preparedness for anxiety, instead of being at its maximum immediately after birth and then slowly decreasing, does not emerge till later on, as the mental development of the infant proceeds. It lasts over a certain period of childhood. If the early phobias persist beyond that period one is inclined to suspect the presence of a neurotic disturbance, although here again it is not at all clear what their relation is to the undoubted neuroses that appear later on in childhood.

Only a few of the manifestations of anxiety in children are comprehensible to us, and we must confine our attention to them. They occur, for instance, when a child is alone or in the dark, or when it finds itself with an unknown person instead of one to whom it is used—such as its mother. These three instances can be reduced to a single condition, namely, that of missing someone who is loved and longed-for.

Here is the key, I think, to an understanding of anxiety and to a reconciliation of the

contradictions that seem to beset it. The child's memory picture of the person longed-for is no doubt intensively cathected, probably in a hallucinatory way at first. But this has no effect; and now it seems as though the longing turns into anxiety. This anxiety has all the appearance of being an expression of the child's feeling of not knowing what to do, as though in its still undeveloped state it did not know how to cope with its cathexis of longing. Here anxiety seems to be a reaction to the felt loss of the object; and one is at once reminded of the fact that castration anxiety, too, is a fear of being separated from a highly valued object, and that the earliest anxiety of all—the primal anxiety of birth—is brought about on the occasion of a separation from the mother.

But our next reflection takes us a step beyond this question of loss of object. The reason why the infant in arms wants to perceive the presence of its mother is only because it already knows by experience that she gratifies all its needs without delay. The situation, then, that it regards as a 'danger' and against which it wants to be safeguarded is one of non-gratification, of a growing tension due to need, against which

it is helpless. I think that if we adopt this view all the facts fall into place. The situation of non-gratification in which the amounts of stimulation rise to an unpleasurable height without the infant being able to master them by utilizing and discharging them psychologically must be analogous for it to the experience of being born—must be a repetition of that situation of danger. What both situations have in common is an economic disturbance caused by an accumulation of amounts of stimulation which require to be disposed of. It is this element which is the real essence of the 'danger'. In both cases the same reaction of anxiety sets in. (This anxiety reaction is still an expedient one in the child at the sucking stage, for, just as it activated the lungs of the new-born baby to get rid of the internal stimuli, so now, in being discharged into the respiratory and vocal muscular apparatus, it calls the mother to the child's side.) It is unnecessary to suppose that the child carries with it from the time of its birth anything more than this way of indicating the presence of danger.

When the child has found out by experience that an external, perceptible object can put an

end to the dangerous situation which is reminiscent of birth, the nature of the danger it fears is displaced from the economic situation on to the condition which determined that situation, viz. the loss of object. 'It is the absence of the mother that is now the danger; and as soon as that danger arises the small child gives the signal of anxiety, before the dreaded economic situation has set in. This change constitutes a first important step forward in the provision made by the child for its self-preservation, and at the same time represents a transition from the automatic and involuntary new-creation of anxiety to the intentional reproduction of anxiety as a signal of danger.

In these two aspects, as an automatic phenomenon and as a rescue-signal, anxiety is seen to be a product of the infant's mental helplessness which is a natural counterpart of its biological helplessness. The striking coincidence by which the anxiety of the new-born baby and the anxiety of the infant in arms both depend upon a separation from the mother does not need to be explained on psychological lines. It can be accounted for simply enough from a biological point of view; for, just as

the mother originally satisfied all the needs of the foetus through her own body, so now, after its birth, she continues to do so, though partly through other means. There is much more continuity between intra-uterine life and earliest infancy than the impressive censorship of the act of birth allows us to believe. What happens is that the child's biological situation as a foetus is replaced for it by a psychological object-relation to its mother. But we must not forget that during its intra-uterine life the mother was not an object for the foetus, and that at that time there were no objects at all as far as it was concerned. It is obvious that in this scheme of things there is no room for the abreaction of the birth-trauma. We cannot find that anxiety has any other function except that of being a signal for the avoidance of a danger-situation.

The importance of the loss of object as a determinant of anxiety extends considerably further. For the next transformation of anxiety, viz. the castration anxiety belonging to the phallic phase, is also a fear of separation and is thus attached to the same determinant. In this case the danger is of being separated from one's

genitals. Ferenczi has traced, quite correctly, I think, a clear line of connection between this fear and the fears contained in the earlier situations of danger. According to him the high degree of narcissistic value which the penis possesses is due to the fact that this organ is a guarantee to its owner that he can be once more united to his mother—*i.e.* to a substitute for her—in the act of copulation. Being deprived of it amounts to a renewed separation from her and this in its turn means being helplessly exposed to an unpleasurable tension due to instinctual need, as was the case in birth. But this need whose increase is feared is now a specific one belonging to the genital libido and is no longer an indeterminate one, as in the period of infancy. It may be added that for a man who is impotent (that is, who is inhibited by the threat of castration) the substitute for copulation is a phantasy of returning into his mother's womb. Following out Ferenczi's line of thought, one might say that such a man, while endeavouring to return to his mother's womb vicariously—by means of his genital organ, proceeds to replace that organ regressively by his body as a whole.

The progress which the child makes in its development—its growing independence, the sharper division of its mental apparatus into several institutions, the advent of new needs—cannot fail to exert an influence upon the content of the danger-situation. We have already traced the change of that content from loss of the mother as an object to castration. The next change is enforced by the power of the super-ego. With the depersonalization of the parental institution from which castration was feared, the danger becomes less defined. Castration anxiety develops into moral anxiety—social anxiety—and it is not so easy now to know what the anxiety is about. The formula, 'separation and expulsion from the horde' only applies to that later portion of the super-ego which has been formed on the strength of social prototypes, not to the nucleus of the super-ego which corresponds to the introjected parental institution. Putting it more generally, what the ego regards as the danger and responds to with an anxiety-signal is that the super-ego should be angry with it or punish it or cease to love it. The final transformation which the fear of the super-ego undergoes is, it seems to



me, the fear of death (or fear for life) which is a fear of the super-ego projected on to the powers of destiny.

At one time I attached some importance to the view that what found discharge in anxiety was the cathexis which had been withdrawn in the process of repression. This view seems to me no longer of any interest. The reason for this is that whereas I formerly believed that anxiety invariably arose automatically through an economic process, my present conception of anxiety as a signal given by the ego in order to affect the pleasure-unpleasure institution does away with the necessity of considering the economic factor. Of course there is nothing to be said against the idea that it is precisely the energy that has been liberated by being withdrawn through repression which is used by the ego to arouse affect; but it is no longer of any importance which portion of the general energy is employed for this purpose.

This new view of things calls for an examination of another proposition of mine, namely, that the ego is the actual seat of anxiety. I think this proposition still holds good. There is, as far as can be seen, no reason to assign any

manifestation of anxiety to the super-ego; while the expression 'anxiety of the id' stands in need of correction, though rather as to its form than its substance. Anxiety is an affective state and as such can, of course, only be felt by the ego. The id cannot have anxiety as the ego can; for it is not an organization and cannot make a judgment about a situation of danger. On the other hand it very often happens that processes take place or begin to take place in the id which cause the ego to produce anxiety. Indeed, it is probable that the earliest repressions as well as most of the later ones are motivated by an ego-anxiety of this sort in regard to processes in the id. Here again one may rightly distinguish between the case in which something occurs in the id which activates a danger-situation for the ego and induces the latter to give the anxiety signal for inhibition to take place, and the case in which a situation analogous to the trauma of birth is established in the id and an automatic reaction of anxiety ensues. The two cases may be brought closer together if it is pointed out that the second case applies to the earliest and original danger-situation, while the first case applies to any one of the later determinants of

anxiety that have been derived from it; or, with regard to psychological disorders, that the second case is operative in the aetiology of the actual neuroses, while the first remains typical for that of the psycho-neuroses.

We see, then, that it is not so much a question of taking back our earlier findings as of bringing them into line with more recent discoveries. It is still an undeniable fact that in sexual abstinence, improper interference with the processes of sexual excitation or deflection of the latter from its psychological modification, anxiety arises directly out of libido; in other words, that the ego is reduced to a state of helplessness in the face of an excessive tension due to need, as it was in the situation of birth, and that anxiety is then produced. Here once more, though the matter is of little importance, it is very possible that what finds discharge in anxiety is precisely the surplus of unutilized libido. As we know, a psycho-neurosis is especially liable to develop on the basis of an actual neurosis. This looks as though the ego were attempting to save itself from anxiety, which it has learned to keep in suspension for a while, and to bind it by the formation of symptoms. Analysis of the

traumatic war-neuroses—a term which, by the way, covers a great variety of disorders—would probably have shown that a number of them possess the characteristics of actual neuroses.

In describing the evolution of the various danger-situations from their prototype, the act of birth, I have had no intention of asserting that every later determinant of anxiety completely invalidates the preceding one. It is true that as the development of the ego goes on the earlier danger-situations tend to lose their force and to be set aside, so that one might say that each period of the individual's life has its appropriate determinant of anxiety. Thus the danger of psychological helplessness is appropriate to the period of life when his ego is immature; the danger of loss of object, to early childhood when he is still dependent on others; the danger of castration, to the phallic phase; and the fear of his super-ego, to the latency period. Nevertheless, all these danger-situations and determinants of anxiety can persist side by side and cause the ego to react to them with anxiety at a later period than the appropriate one; or, again, several of them can come into operation at the same time. It is possible, moreover, that there

is a close relationship between the danger-situation that is operative at a given moment and the form taken by the ensuing neurosis.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Since the differentiation of the ego and the id, our interest in the problems of repression cannot fail to have received a fresh impetus. Up till then we had been content to confine our interest to those aspects of repression which concerned the ego—the keeping away from consciousness and from motility, and the formation of substitutes (symptoms). With regard to the instinctual impulses themselves, we assumed that they remained unaltered in the unconscious for an indefinite length of time. But now our interest is turned to the vicissitudes of the repressed and we begin to suspect that it is not self-evident, perhaps not even the usual thing, that those impulses should remain unaltered and unalterable in this way. There is no doubt that the original impulses have been inhibited and deflected from their aim through repression. But has the unconscious portion of them maintained itself and been proof against the influences of life that tend to alter and depreciate them? In other words, are the old desires, about whose former existence analysis tells us, still there? The answer seems ready to hand and certain. It is that the old, repressed desires must still be present in the unconscious since we still find their derivatives, the symptoms, at work. But this answer is not sufficient. It does not enable us to decide between two possibilities, either that the old desire is now operating only through its derivatives, having transferred the whole of its cathectic energy to them, or that it is itself still alive too. If its fate has been to exhaust itself in cathecting its derivatives, there is yet a third possibility. In the course of the neurosis it may have become reanimated by regression, anachronistic though it be. These are no idle speculations. There are many things about mental life, both normal and pathological, which seem to call for questions of this kind. In my paper, 'The Passing of the Oedipus-Complex'

When, in an earlier part of this discussion, we found that the danger of castration was of importance in more than one neurotic affection, we put ourselves on guard against over-estimating that factor, since it could not be a decisive one for the female sex, and since women are undoubtedly more subject to neuroses than men. We now see that there is no danger of our regarding castration anxiety as the sole motive force of the defensive processes which lead to neurosis. I have shown elsewhere how the little girl, in the course of her development, is led to make a loving object-cathexis through her castration complex. It is precisely in women that the danger-situation of loss of object seems to have remained the most effective. All we need to do is to make a slight modification in our description of their determinant of anxiety, in the sense that it is no longer a matter of feeling the want of, or actually losing, the object itself, but of losing the object's love. Since there is no doubt that hysteria has a strong affinity with

(*Collected Papers*, vol. ii. (1924)), I had occasion to notice the difference between mere repression and the real removal of an old conative impulse.

the nature of women, just as obsessional neurosis has with that of men, it appears probable that, as a determinant of anxiety, loss of love plays much the same part in hysteria as the threat of castration does in phobias and fear of the super-ego in obsessional neurosis.

## CHAPTER IX

WHAT we have now to do is to consider the relationship between the formation of symptoms and the production of anxiety.

There seem to be two very widely held opinions on this subject. One is that anxiety is itself a neurotic symptom. The other is that there is a much more intimate relation between the two. According to the second opinion, symptoms are only formed in order to avoid anxiety: they bind the mental energy which would otherwise be discharged as anxiety. Thus anxiety would be the fundamental phenomenon and main problem of neurosis.

That this latter opinion is at least in part true is shown by some striking examples. If an agoraphobic patient who has been accompanied into the street is left alone there, he will have an anxiety attack. Or if an obsessional neurotic is prevented from washing his hands after having touched something, he will become a prey to almost unbearable anxiety. It is plain, then,



that the purpose and the result of having a companion in the street or of washing the hands were to obviate outbreaks of anxiety of this kind. In this sense every inhibition which the ego imposes upon itself can be called a symptom.

Since we have traced back the production of anxiety to a situation of danger we should prefer to say that symptoms are created in order to remove the ego from a situation of danger. If the symptoms are prevented from being formed the danger does in fact materialize; that is, a situation analogous to birth is established in which the ego is helpless in the face of a constantly increasing instinctual demand—the earliest and original determinant of anxiety. Thus in our view the relation between anxiety and symptom is less close than was supposed, for we have inserted the factor of the danger-situation between them. We can also add that the production of anxiety sets symptom-formation going and is, indeed, a necessary pre-requisite of it. For if the ego did not arouse the pleasure-unpleasure institution by developing anxiety, it would not have the power to arrest the process which is preparing in the

id and which threatens danger. There is in all this an evident inclination to limit to a minimum the amount of anxiety developed and to employ it only as a signal; for to do more would only be to feel in another place the unpleasure which the instinctual process was threatening to produce, and that would not be a good result from the standpoint of the pleasure-principle, although it is one that occurs often enough in the neuroses.

The formation of symptoms, then, does in effect put an end to the danger-situation. It has two aspects: one, hidden from view, brings about those alterations in the id in virtue of which the ego is removed from danger; the other presents to the world what the symptom-formation has created in place of the instinctual process which has been affected—namely, the substitutive formation.

It would, however, be more correct to ascribe to the defensive process what we have just said about symptom-formation and to use the latter term as synonymous with substitute-formation. It will then be clear that the defensive process is analogous to the method adopted by the ego for removing itself from a danger that threatens

it from outside, that is, to flight. The defensive process is an attempt at flight from an instinctual danger. An examination of the weak points in this comparison should prove informative. One thing that can be said against it is that the loss of an object (or loss of love on the part of the object) and the threat of castration are just as much dangers coming from without as, say, a ferocious animal would be; they are not instinctual dangers. Nevertheless, the two cases are not the same. A wolf would probably attack a man irrespectively of his behaviour towards it; but the loved person would not cease to love him, nor would he be threatened with castration if he did not entertain certain feelings and intentions in his mind. Thus such instinctual impulses are determinants of external dangers and so become dangerous in themselves; and the individual can proceed against the external dangers by taking measures against the internal ones. In phobias of animals the danger seems to be still entirely felt as an external one, just as it has undergone an external displacement in the symptoms. In obsessional neuroses the danger is much more internalized. That portion of anxiety in regard to the super-ego which con-

stitutes social anxiety represents an internal substitute for an external danger, while the other portion—moral anxiety—is already completely endo-psychic.

Another objection is that in taking flight from an impending external danger all that the subject does is to increase the distance between himself and what is threatening him. He does not prepare to defend himself against it or attempt to alter anything about it as would be the case if he attacked the wolf with a stick or shot at it with a gun. Now the defensive process seems to do something more than would correspond to an attempt at flight. It joins issue with the threatening instinctual process and somehow suppresses it or deflects it from its aims and thus renders it innocuous. This objection seems unimpeachable and must be given due weight. I think it is probable that there are some defensive processes which can truly be likened to an attempt at flight, while in others the ego takes a much more active line of self-protection and initiates vigorous counter-measures. But perhaps the whole analogy between defence and flight is invalidated by the fact that both the ego and the instinct in the id

are parts of the same organization, not separate entities like the wolf and the child, so that any kind of behaviour on the part of the ego will result in an alteration in the instinctual process as well.

This study of the determinants of anxiety has, as it were, shown the defensive behaviour of the ego in a rational light. Each situation of danger corresponds to a particular period of life or developmental phase of the mental apparatus and appears to be justifiable for it. In early infancy the individual is really not fitted to master psychologically the large quantities of excitation that impinge upon him whether from without or from within. Again, at a certain period of life his most important interest really is that the people he is dependent on should not withdraw their loving care of him. Later on in his boyhood, when he feels that his father is a powerful rival in regard to his mother and becomes aware of his own aggressive inclinations towards him and of his sexual intentions towards his mother, he really is justified in being afraid of his father; and his fear of being punished by him can find expression through phylogenetic reinforcement in the fear of being

castrated. Finally, as he enters into social relationships, it really is necessary for him to be afraid of his super-ego, his conscience; for the absence of that factor would give rise for him to severe conflicts, dangers and so on.

But this last point raises a new problem. Instead of the affect of anxiety let us take, for a moment, another affect, say that of pain. It seems quite normal that at four years of age a girl should weep painfully if her doll is broken; or at six, if her schoolmistress reproves her; or at sixteen, if she is slighted by her young man; or at twenty-five, if a child of her own dies. Each of these determinants of pain has its own time and each passes away when that time is over. Only the final and definitive determinants remain throughout life. We should think it rather unusual if this same girl, after she had grown to be a wife and mother, were to cry over some worthless trinket that had been damaged. Yet that is how the neurotic behaves. Although all the institutions for mastering stimuli have long ago been developed within wide limits in his mental apparatus, and although he is sufficiently grown-up to gratify most of his needs for himself and has long ago learnt that

castration is no longer practised as a punishment, he nevertheless behaves as though the old danger-situations still existed, and retains all the earlier determinants of anxiety.

Why this should be so requires a rather long answer. First of all, let us see what the facts are. In a great number of cases the old determinants of anxiety do really lapse, after having produced neurotic reactions. The phobias of infants, which consist in being afraid of being alone or in the dark or among strangers—phobias which can almost be called normal—usually pass off later on; the child ‘grows out of them’, as we say about many other disturbances of childhood. Animal phobias, which are of such frequent occurrence, undergo the same fate and many conversion-hysterias of early years find no continuation in later life. Ceremonial actions appear extremely often in the latency period but only a very small proportion of them develop later into a full obsessional neurosis. In general, so far as we can tell from our observations of town children belonging to the white races and living according to fairly high cultural standards, the neuroses of childhood are in the nature of regular

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episodes in a child's development, although too little attention is still being paid to them. Signs of childhood neuroses can be detected in all adult neurotics without exception; but by no means all children who show those signs become neurotic in later life. It must be, therefore, that certain determinants of anxiety are relinquished and certain danger-situations lose their significance as the individual becomes more mature. Moreover, some of these danger-situations manage to survive into later times by modifying their determinants of anxiety so as to bring them up to date. Thus, for instance, a man may retain his fear of castration in the guise of a syphilidophobia, after he has got to know that it is no longer customary to castrate people for indulging their sexual lusts, but that, on the other hand, severe diseases may overtake anyone who thus gives way to his instincts. Furthermore, some determinants of anxiety, such as fear of the super-ego, are destined not to disappear at all but to accompany the individual throughout his life. In that case the neurotic will differ from the normal person in that his reactions to the dangers in question will be unduly strong. Finally, being grown-up



affords no absolute protection against a return of the original traumatic anxiety-situation. Each individual has in all probability a limit beyond which his mental apparatus fails in its function of mastering the quantities of excitation which require to be disposed of.

These minor rectifications cannot in any way alter the main fact that a great many people remain infantile in their behaviour in regard to danger and do not overcome age-old determinants of anxiety. To deny this would be to deny the existence of neurosis, for it is precisely such people whom we call neurotics. But how is this possible? Why are not all neuroses episodes in the development of the individual which come to a close when the next phase is reached? Whence comes the element of persistence in these reactions to danger? Why does the affect of anxiety alone seem to enjoy the advantage over all other affects of evoking reactions which are distinguished from the rest in being abnormal and which, through their inexpediency, run counter to the movement of life? In other words, we have once more unexpectedly come upon the riddle which has so often confronted

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us: whence does neurosis come—what is its ultimate, its own peculiar meaning? After whole tens of years of psycho-analytic work we are as much in the dark about this problem as ever.

## CHAPTER X

ANXIETY is the reaction to danger. One cannot help suspecting, however, that the reason why the affect of anxiety occupies a unique position in the economy of the mind has something to do with the essential nature of danger. Yet danger is a universal human experience; dangers are the same for everybody. What we need and cannot lay our finger on is some factor which will explain why some people are able to subject the affect of anxiety, in spite of its unique quality, to the ordinary workings of the mind, or why others are doomed to break down over this task. Two attempts to find a factor of this kind have been made; and it is natural that such efforts should meet with a sympathetic reception, since they set out to fill a most urgent need. The two attempts in question are mutually complementary; they approach the problem at opposite ends. The first was made by Alfred Adler more than ten years ago.<sup>1</sup> He maintained in essence

<sup>1</sup> [Written in 1926.—*Trans.*]

that it was those individuals who were too greatly impeded by some organic inferiority who failed to master the task set before them by danger. If it were true that *simplex sigillum veri*, we should welcome this answer as a perfect solution of the problem. But on the contrary, our critical studies of the last ten years have effectively demonstrated the total inadequacy of such an explanation—an explanation, moreover, which sets aside the whole wealth of material that has been discovered by psycho-analysis.

The second attempt was made by Otto Rank in 1923 in his book, *The Trauma of Birth*. It would be unjust to put his attempt on the same level as Adler's except in this single point which concerns us here, for it remains upon psycho-analytic ground and pursues a psycho-analytic line of thought, so that it may be accepted as a legitimate endeavour to solve the problems of analysis. In this matter of the relation of the individual to danger Rank moves away from the question of organic defect in the individual and concentrates on the variable degree of intensity of the danger.

The event of birth is the first situation of danger and the economic upheaval which it

produces becomes the prototype of reaction to anxiety. We have already traced the line of development which connects this first danger-situation and determinant of anxiety with all the later ones, and we have seen that they all retain a common quality in so far as they signify in some way a separation from the mother—at first only in a biological sense, next as a direct loss of object and later as a loss of object indirectly incurred. The discovery of this extensive concatenation is an undoubted achievement of Rank's constructive work. Now the trauma of birth overtakes each individual with a different degree of intensity, and the violence of his anxiety-reaction varies with the strength of the trauma. According to Rank, whether the individual will ever learn to control his anxiety—whether he will become normal or neurotic—will depend upon the intensity of the initial anxiety that is thus produced in him.

It is not our business to criticize Rank's hypothesis in detail here. All we need to do is to consider whether it helps to solve the particular problem before us. His proposition that those persons become neurotic in whom the trauma of birth was so strong that they have

never been able completely to abreact it is highly dubious from a theoretical point of view. We do not rightly know what is meant by abreacting a trauma. Taken literally it implies that the more frequently and the more intensely a neurotic person reproduces affects of anxiety the more closely will he approach to mental health. This conclusion is not tenable. It was because it did not tally with the facts that I gave up the theory of abreaction which had played such a large part in the cathartic method. To lay so much stress on the variability in the strength of the birth trauma is to leave no room for the legitimate claims of hereditary constitution as an aetiological factor. For this variability is an organic factor which operates in an accidental fashion in relation to the constitution and is itself dependent on many influences which might be called accidental—as, for instance, upon timely assistance in child-birth. Rank's theory completely ignores constitutional factors as well as phylogenetic ones. If, however, we were to try to find a place for the constitutional factor by qualifying his statement with the proviso, let us say, that what is really important is the extent to which the individual reacts to

the variable intensity of the trauma of birth, we should be depriving his theory of its significance and should be relegating the new factor introduced by him to a position of minor importance: the factor which decided whether a neurosis should supervene or not would lie in a different, and once more in an unknown, field.

Moreover, the fact that while man has the process of birth in common with the other mammals he alone is privileged to possess a special predisposition to neurosis is hardly favourable to Rank's theory. But the main objection to his theory is that it floats in the air instead of being based upon ascertained observations. No body of evidence has been collected to show that difficult and protracted birth does in fact coincide with the development of a neurosis, or even that children so born exhibit early infantile apprehensiveness more strongly and over a longer period than other children. It might be rejoined that precipitate labour and births that are easy for the mother quite possibly involve a severe trauma for the child. But we can still point out that births which lead to asphyxia would be bound to give clear evidence of the results which are

supposed to follow. It should be one of the advantages of Rank's aetiological theory that it postulates a factor whose existence can be verified by observation. And so long as no such attempt at verification has been made it is impossible to assess the value of that theory.

On the other hand I cannot identify myself with the view that Rank's theory contradicts the aetiological importance of the sexual instincts as hitherto recognized by psychoanalysis. For his theory only has reference to the position of the individual in regard to the danger-situation, so that it leaves it perfectly open to us to assume that if a person has not been able to master his first dangers he is bound to succumb to later situations involving sexual dangers and thus be driven into a neurosis.

I do not believe, therefore, that Rank's attempt has solved the problem of the causation of neurosis; nor do I believe that we can say as yet how much it may have contributed to such a solution. If an investigation into the effects of difficult birth upon the predisposition to neurosis should yield negative results we shall rate the value of his contribution low. It is to be feared that our endeavours to find a



single, tangible 'ultimate cause' of neurotic illness will go unrewarded. The ideal solution, which the medical man no doubt still yearns for, would be to discover some bacillus which could be isolated and bred in a pure culture and which, when injected into a person, would invariably produce the same illness; or, to put it somewhat less fantastically, to demonstrate the existence of certain chemical substances the administration of which would create or abolish particular neuroses. But the probability of a solution of this kind seems slight.

Psycho-analysis leads to less simple and satisfactory conclusions. What I have to say in this connection is already long since known and contains nothing new. If the ego succeeds in protecting itself from a dangerous instinctual impulse, through, say, the process of repression, it has certainly inhibited and damaged the particular part of the id concerned; but it has at the same time given it a bit of independence and has renounced a bit of its own sovereignty. This is inevitable from the nature of repression, which is, fundamentally, an attempt at flight. The repressed is now, as it were, outlawed; it is excluded from the great organization of the

ego and is only subject to the laws which govern the realm of the unconscious. If, now, the danger-situation changes so that the ego has no reason for warding off a new instinctual impulse which resembles the repressed one, the consequence of the restriction of the ego which has taken place will become manifest. The new impulse will run its course under an automatic influence—or, as I should prefer to say, under the influence of the repetition-compulsion. It will follow the same path as the earlier, repressed impulse, as though the danger-situation that had been overcome still existed. The fixating factor in repression, then, is the repetition-compulsion of the unconscious id—a compulsion which in normal circumstances is only done away with by the mobile function of the ego. The ego may occasionally manage to break down the barriers of repression which it has itself put up and to recover its influence over the instinctual impulse and direct its course in accordance with the changed danger-situation. But in point of fact the ego very seldom succeeds in doing this: it cannot undo its repressions. It is possible that the way the struggle will go depends upon quantitative relations. In many

cases one has the impression that the outcome is an enforced one: the regressive attraction exerted by the repressed impulse and the strength of the repression are so great that the new impulse has no choice but to obey the compulsion to repeat. In other cases the entrance of yet another element into the play of forces may be perceived: the attraction exerted by the repressed instinctual prototype is reinforced by a repulsion brought to bear by objective difficulties which are opposed to the new impulse taking a different course.

That this is the origin of fixation in repression and of the retention of danger-situations which are no longer present-day ones is confirmed by the fact of psycho-analytic therapy—a fact which is modest enough in itself but which can hardly be over-rated from a theoretical point of view. When, in the course of an analysis, we have given the ego assistance and have put it in a position to abolish its repressions, it recovers its power over the repressed id and can allow the instinctual impulses to run their course as though the old situations of danger no longer existed. What we can do in this way is in general accord with the therapeutic achievements of

medicine; for as a rule we must be satisfied with bringing about more quickly, more certainly and with less expenditure of energy than would otherwise be the case a desired result which in favourable circumstances would have occurred of itself.

We see from what has been said that it is quantitative relations—relations which are not directly observable but can only be inferred—which determine whether or no old situations of danger shall be preserved, repressions on the part of the ego maintained and childhood neuroses find continuance. Among the factors that play a part in the causation of neuroses and that have created the conditions under which the forces of the mind are pitted against one another, three emerge into prominence: a biological, a phylogenetic and a purely psychological factor.

The biological factor is the long period of time during which the young of the human species is in a condition of helplessness and dependence. Its intra-uterine existence seems to be short in comparison with that of most animals, and it is sent into the world in a less finished state. As a result the influence of the

objective world upon it is intensified and it is obliged to make an early differentiation between the ego and the id. Moreover, the dangers of the outer world have a greater importance for it, so that the value of the object which can alone protect it against them and take the place of its former intra-uterine life is enormously enhanced. This biological factor, then, establishes the earliest situations of danger and creates the need to be loved which will accompany the child through the rest of its life.

The existence of the second, phylogenetic, factor, is based only upon inference. We have been led to assume its reality by a remarkable feature in the development of the libido. We have found that the sexual life of man, unlike that of most of the animals nearly related to him, does not make a steady advance from birth to maturity, but that, after an early expansion up till the fifth year, it undergoes a very decided interruption; and that it then starts on its course once more at puberty, beginning from the point at which it broke off in early childhood. This has led us to suppose that something momentous must have occurred in the vicissitudes of the human species which has left behind this

interruption in the sexual development of the individual as a kind of historical precipitate. This factor owes its pathogenic significance to the fact that the majority of instinctual impulses belonging to infantile sexuality are treated by the ego as dangers and warded off as such, so that the later sexual impulses of puberty, which in the natural course of things would be ego-syntonic, run the risk of succumbing to the attraction of their infantile prototypes and following them into repression. It is here that we come upon the most direct aetiology of the neuroses. It is a curious thing that early contact with the demands of sexuality should have a similar effect on the ego as premature contact with the external world.

The third, psychological, factor resides in a defect of the mental apparatus which has to do with its differentiation into id and ego, and which is therefore ultimately attributable to the influence of the external world. In view of the dangers of objective reality the ego is obliged to guard against certain instinctual impulses in the id and to treat them as dangers. But it cannot protect itself from internal instinctual dangers as effectively as it can from some bit of objective

reality that is not part of itself. Intimately bound up with the id as it is, it can only ward off an instinctual danger by restricting its own organization and by acquiescing in the formation of symptoms in exchange for having impaired the instinct. If the rejected instinct renews its attack, the ego is overtaken by all those difficulties which are known to us as neurotic illness.

Further than this, I believe, our knowledge of the nature and causes of neurosis has not as yet been able to go.

## CHAPTER XI

### APPENDICES

IN the course of this discussion various themes have had to be put aside before they had been fully dealt with. They have been brought together in this chapter in order to receive the attention they deserve.

#### A

#### *MODIFICATIONS OF EARLIER VIEWS*

##### *(a) Resistance and Anti-Cathexis*

An important element in the theory of repression is the view that repression is not an event that occurs once but that it requires a permanent expenditure of energy. If this expenditure of energy were to cease the repressed impulse, which is being fed all the time from its sources of energy, would seize the next occasion to flow along the channels from which it has been forced aside, and the repression



would either fail in its purpose or would have to be repeated an indefinite number of times. Thus it is because instincts are incessant in their nature that the ego has to make its defensive action secure by a permanent expenditure of energy. This action undertaken to protect repression is perceptible as *resistance* in analytic treatment. Resistance presupposes the existence of what I have called an *anti-cathexis*. An anti-cathexis of this kind is best seen in obsessional neurosis. It appears in the form of an alteration of the ego, as a reaction-formation in the ego, and is effected by the reinforcement of the attitude which is the opposite of the instinctual trend that has to be repressed, as is seen, for instance, in pity, conscientiousness and cleanliness. These reaction-formations of obsessional neurosis are essentially exaggerations of the normal traits of character which develop during the latency period. The presence of an anti-cathexis in hysteria is much more difficult to detect, though theoretically it is equally indispensable. In hysteria, too, a certain amount of alteration of the ego through reaction-formation is unmistakable and in many circumstances becomes

so marked that it forces itself on our attention as the principal symptom. The conflict of ambivalence in hysteria, for instance, is resolved by this means. The subject's hatred of a person whom he loves is kept down by an exaggerated amount of tenderness for him and apprehensiveness about him. But the difference between reaction-formations in obsessional neurosis and in hysteria is that in the latter they do not have the universality of a character-trait but are confined to particular relationships. A hysterical woman, for instance, may be specially affectionate with her own children whom at bottom she hates; but she will not be a more affectionate person than other women or even very fond of children in general. The reaction-formation of hysteria clings tenaciously to a particular object and never spreads over into a general disposition of the ego, whereas what is characteristic of obsessional neurosis is precisely a spreading over of this kind—a loosening of relations to the object and a great facility of displacement in the choice of object.

There is another kind of anti-cathexis, however, which seems more suited to the peculiar character of hysteria. A repressed instinctual

impulse can be activated (newly cathected) from two directions: from within, through reinforcement from its internal sources of excitation, and from without, through the perception of an object that it desires. The hysterical anti-cathexis is mainly directed outwards, against dangerous perceptions. It takes the form of a special kind of vigilance which, by means of restrictions of the ego, causes situations to be avoided that would entail such perceptions, or if they do occur, manages to withdraw the subject's attention from them. Some French analysts, in particular Laforgue, have recently given this action of hysteria the special name of 'scotomization'. This technique of anti-cathexis is still more noticeable in the phobias, where interest is concentrated on removing the subject ever further from the possibility of making the feared perception. The fact that anti-cathexis should be orientated in an opposite direction in hysteria and the phobias from what it is in obsessional neurosis—though the difference is not an absolute one—seems to be significant. It suggests that there is an intimate connection between repression and external anti-cathexis on the one hand and between

regression and internal anti-cathexis (*i.e.* alterations in the ego through reaction-formations) on the other. The task of defending against a dangerous perception is, incidentally, common to all neuroses. Various commands and prohibitions in obsessional neurosis have the same end in view.

As has already been seen, the resistance that has to be overcome in analysis proceeds from the ego clinging to its anti-cathexes. It is hard for the ego to direct its attention to perceptions and ideas which it has up till now made a rule of avoiding, or to acknowledge as belonging to itself impulses that are the complete opposite of those which it has made its own. Our campaign against resistance in analysis is based upon this view of the facts. If the resistance is itself unconscious, as so often happens owing to its connection with the repressed material, we make that resistance conscious. If it is conscious, or when it has become conscious, we bring forward logical arguments against it; we promise the ego rewards and advantages if it will give up its resistance. There can be no doubt or mistake about the existence of this resistance on the part of the ego. But we have to ask our-

selves whether it covers the whole state of affairs in analysis. For we find that even after the ego has decided to relinquish its resistances it still has difficulty in undoing the repressions; and we have called the period of strenuous effort which follows after its praiseworthy decision, the phase of 'working through'. The dynamic factor which makes a working through of this kind necessary and comprehensible is not far to seek. It must be that after the ego-resistance has been removed the power of the repetition-compulsion—the attraction exerted by the unconscious prototypes upon the repressed instinctual process—has yet to be overcome. This factor might well be described as the *resistance of the unconscious*. There is no need to be discouraged by these emendations in our theory. They are to be welcomed if they do something towards furthering our knowledge, and they are no disgrace to us so long as they enrich rather than invalidate our earlier views—by limiting some statement, perhaps, that was too general or by enlarging some idea that was too narrowly formulated.

It must not be supposed that these emendations provide us with a complete review of all

the varieties of resistance that are met with in analysis. Further investigation of the subject shows that the analyst has to combat no less than five varieties of resistance, emanating from three quarters—the ego, the id and the super-ego. The id and the super-ego supply one variety apiece, while the ego is the source of three, each differing in its dynamic nature. The first of these three ego-resistances is the resistance due to repression, which we have already discussed and about which there is least new to be added. Next there is the transference resistance, which is of the same nature but has different and much clearer effects in analysis, since it succeeds in establishing a relation to the analytic situation or the analyst himself and thus re-animating a repression which should only have been recollected. The third resistance, though also an ego-resistance, is of quite a different nature. It proceeds from the epinoic gain and is based upon an assimilation of the symptom by the ego. It represents an unwillingness to renounce any gratification or relief that has been obtained. The fourth variety, belonging to the id, is the resistance which, as has just been seen, necessitates 'working through'. The fifth,

belonging to the super-ego and the last to be discovered, is also the most obscure though not always the least powerful one. It seems to originate from the sense of guilt or the need for punishment; and it opposes every move towards success, including, therefore, the patient's own recovery through analysis.

*(b) Anxiety from Transformation of Libido*

The view of anxiety which I have put forward in these pages differs somewhat from the one I have hitherto held. Formerly I regarded anxiety as a general reaction of the ego to conditions of unpleasure. I always sought to account for its appearance on economic grounds and I assumed, on the strength of my investigations into the actual neuroses, that libido (sexual excitement) which was rejected or not utilized by the ego found direct discharge in the form of anxiety. It cannot be denied that these various assertions did not go very well together, or at any rate did not imply one another. Moreover, they gave the impression of there being a specially intimate connection between anxiety and libido and this did not accord with the general character of anxiety as a reaction to unpleasure.

The objection to this view arose from our coming to regard the ego as the sole seat of anxiety. It was one of the results of the attempt to subdivide the mental apparatus which I made in *The Ego and the Id*. Whereas the old view made it natural to suppose that anxiety arose from the libido belonging to the repressed instinctual impulses, the new one tended to make the ego the source of anxiety. Thus it is a question of id-anxiety (instinctual anxiety) versus ego-anxiety. Since the energy which the ego employed is desexualized, the new view tended to weaken the close connection between anxiety and libido. I hope I have at least succeeded in making the contradiction plain and in giving a clear idea of the point in doubt.

Rank's contention—which was originally my own—that the affect of anxiety is a consequence of the event of birth and a repetition of the situation then experienced, obliged me to review the problem of anxiety once more. But I could make no headway with his idea that birth is a trauma, states of anxiety a reaction of discharge to it and all subsequent affects of anxiety an attempt to 'abreact' it more and more completely. I was obliged to go beyond the anxiety



reaction to the situation of danger that lay behind it. The introduction of this element opened up new aspects of the question. Birth was seen to be the prototype of all later situations of danger which overtook the individual under the new conditions arising from a changed mode of life and a growing mental development. The significance of birth in regard to danger was, however, reduced to its occupying this rôle of a prototype. The anxiety felt at birth became the prototype of an affective state which had to undergo the same vicissitudes as the other affects. Two things might happen to this affect of anxiety: it might reproduce itself automatically in situations which resembled the original situation and thus be an inexpedient form of reaction instead of an expedient one as it had been in the first situation; or the ego might acquire power over it and reproduce it on its own initiative, and employ it as a warning of danger and as a means of setting the pleasure-unpleasure mechanism in motion. We thus gave the biological aspect of the affect of anxiety its due importance by recognizing anxiety as the general reaction to situations of danger; while

we endorsed the part played by the ego as the seat of anxiety by allocating to it the function of producing the affect of anxiety according to its needs. Thus we attributed two sources of origin to anxiety in later life. One was involuntary, automatic and always due to economic causes and arose whenever a situation analogous to birth had established itself. The other was produced by the ego as soon as a situation of this kind merely threatened to occur, in order that it might be avoided. In the second case the ego subjected itself to anxiety as though to a sort of inoculation, willing to go through a slight attack of the illness in order to escape its full strength. It vividly imagined the danger-situation, as it were, with the unmistakable purpose of restricting the actual painful experience to a mere indication, a signal. We have already seen in detail how the various situations of danger arise one after the other, remaining at the same time connected in their origin.

We shall perhaps be able to proceed a little further in our knowledge of anxiety when we turn to the problem of the relation between neurotic anxiety and objective anxiety.

Our former hypothesis of a direct transformation of libido into anxiety possesses less interest for us now than it did. But if we do nevertheless consider this matter of transformation we shall have to distinguish different cases. As regards anxiety evoked by the ego as a signal, it does not come into consideration; nor does it, therefore, in any of those danger-situations which stimulate the ego to bring on repression. The libidinal cathexis of the repressed instinctual impulse is otherwise employed than in being transformed into anxiety and discharged as such, as is most clearly seen in conversion-hysteria. On the other hand, further enquiry into the question of the danger-situation will bring to our notice an instance of the production of anxiety which will, I think, have to be accounted for in a different way.

### *(c) Repression and Defence*

In the course of discussing the problem of anxiety I have revived a concept or, to put it more modestly, a term, of which I made exclusive use thirty years ago when I first began to study the subject but which I later abandoned.

I refer to the term 'defensive process'.<sup>1</sup> I afterwards used the word 'repression', but the relation between the two remained uncertain. It will be an undoubted advantage, I think, to revert to the old term of 'defence', provided we employ it explicitly as a general designation for all the techniques which the ego makes use of in conflicts which may lead to a neurosis, while we retain the word 'repression' for that special method of defence which the line of approach taken by our investigations made us better acquainted with in the first instance.

Even a terminological innovation ought to justify its adoption; it ought to reflect some new point of view or some extension of knowledge. The revival of the idea of defence and the restriction of that of repression takes into account a fact which has long since been known but which has received added importance owing to some new discoveries. Our first observations of repression and the formation of symptoms were made in connection with hysteria. We found that the perceptual content of excitatory experiences and the ideational con-

<sup>1</sup> Freud, 'The Defence Neuro-Psychoses' (1894), *Collected Papers*, vol. i.

tent of pathogenic structures of thought were forgotten and debarred from being reproduced in memory, and we therefore concluded that the keeping away from consciousness was a main characteristic of hysterical repression. Later on, when we came to study the obsessional neuroses, we saw that in that illness pathogenic occurrences were not forgotten. They remained conscious; but they were 'isolated' in some way that we could not as yet grasp, so that much the same result was obtained as in hysterical amnesia. Nevertheless the difference was great enough to justify the belief that the process by which instinctual impulses were set aside in obsessional neurosis could not be the same as in hysteria. Further investigations have shown that in obsessional neurosis a regression of the instinctual impulses to an earlier libidinal stage takes place owing to the opposition of the ego, and that this regression clearly works in the same sense as repression although it does not make repression unnecessary. We have seen, too, that in obsessional neurosis anti-cathexis, which is also presumably present in hysteria, plays a specially large part in protecting the ego by effecting a reactive alteration in it. Our

attention has, moreover, been drawn to a process of 'isolation' (whose technique cannot as yet be elucidated) which has direct symptomatic manifestations of its own, and to a procedure, that may be called magical, of 'undoing' what has been done—a procedure about whose repudiating purpose there can be no doubt, but which has no longer any resemblance to the process of repression. These observations provide good enough grounds for re-introducing the old concept of defence, which can cover all of these processes with their same purpose—namely, the protection of the ego against instinctual demands—and for subsuming repression under it as a special instance. The importance of this nomenclature is heightened if we consider the possibility that further investigations may show that there is an intimate connection between special forms of defence and particular illnesses, as, for instance, between repression and hysteria. In addition we may look forward to the possible discovery of yet another important relationship. It may well be that before its sharp cleavage into an ego and an id, and before the formation of a super-ego, the mental apparatus makes use

of different methods of defence from those which it employs after it has attained these levels of organization.

## B

### *SUPPLEMENTARY REMARKS ON ANXIETY*

The affect of anxiety exhibits one or two features the study of which promises to throw further light on the subject. Anxiety has an unmistakable affinity with expectation: it is anxiety *about* something. It has a quality of indefiniteness and lack of object. In precise speech we use the word 'fear' rather than 'anxiety' if the feeling has found an object. Moreover, in addition to its relation to danger, anxiety has a relation to neurosis which we have long been trying to elucidate. The question arises: why are not all reactions of anxiety neurotic—why do we accept so many of them as normal? And finally the problem of the difference between objective anxiety and neurotic anxiety awaits a thorough examination.

To begin with the last problem. The advance we have made is that we have gone behind

reactions of anxiety to situations of danger. If we do the same thing with objective anxiety we shall have no difficulty in solving the question. Objective danger is a danger that is known, and objective anxiety is anxiety about a known danger of this sort. Neurotic anxiety is anxiety about an unknown danger. Neurotic danger is thus a danger that has still to be discovered. Analysis has shown that it is an instinctual danger. By bringing this danger which is not known to the ego into consciousness, the analyst makes neurotic anxiety no different from objective anxiety, so that it can be dealt with in the same way.

There are two reactions to objective danger. One, an affective reaction, is an outbreak of anxiety. The other is a protective action. The same will presumably be true of instinctual danger. We know how the two reactions can co-operate in an expedient way, the one giving the signal for the other to appear. But they can also behave in an inexpedient way: paralysis due to anxiety may set in, and the one reaction spread at the cost of the other.

In some cases the characteristics of objective anxiety and neurotic anxiety are mingled. The



danger is known and objective but the anxiety in regard to it is over-great, greater than seems proper. It is this surplus of anxiety which betrays the presence of a neurotic element. Such cases, however, contain no new principle; for analysis shows that to the known objective danger is attached an unknown instinctual one.

We can find out still more about this if, not content with tracing anxiety back to danger, we go on to enquire what the essence and meaning of a danger-situation is. Clearly, it consists in the subject's estimation of his own strength compared to the magnitude of the danger and in his admission of helplessness in the face of it—physical helplessness if the danger is objective and psychological helplessness if it is instinctual. In doing this he will be guided by the actual experiences he has had. (Whether he is wrong in his estimation or not is immaterial for the outcome.) Let us call a situation of helplessness of this kind that has been actually experienced a *traumatic situation*. We shall then have good grounds for distinguishing a traumatic situation from a danger-situation.

The individual will have made an important advance in his capacity for self-preservation if

he can foresee and expect a traumatic situation of this kind entailing helplessness instead of simply waiting for it to happen. Let us call a situation which contains the determinant for an expectation of this kind a danger-situation. It is in this situation that the signal of anxiety is made. The signal announces: 'I am expecting a situation of helplessness to set in', or: 'The present situation reminds me of one of the traumatic experiences I have had before. Therefore I will anticipate the trauma and behave as though it had already come, while there is yet time to turn it aside.' Anxiety is therefore on the one hand an expectation of a trauma, and on the other a repetition of it in a mitigated form. Thus the two features of anxiety which we have noted have a different origin. Its connection with expectation belongs to the danger-situation, whereas its indefiniteness and lack of object belong to the traumatic situation of helplessness—the situation which is anticipated in the danger-situation.

Taking this sequence, anxiety—danger—helplessness (trauma), we can now summarize what has been said. A danger-situation is a recognized, remembered and expected situation

of helplessness. Anxiety is the original reaction to helplessness in the trauma and is reproduced later on in the danger-situation as a signal for help. The ego, which has undergone the trauma passively, now repeats it actively in a weakened version, hoping to have the direction of it in its own hands. It is certain that children behave in this fashion towards every painful impression they receive, by reproducing it in their play. In thus changing from passivity to activity they attempt to master it psychologically. If this is what is meant by 'abreacting a trauma' we can have nothing to urge against the phrase. But what is of decisive importance is the first displacement of the anxiety reaction from its origin in the situation of helplessness to an expectation of that situation, that is, to the danger-situation. After that come the later displacements, from the danger to the determinant of the danger—loss of the object and the modifications of that loss with which we are already acquainted.

The undesirable result of 'spoiling' the small child is to increase the importance of the danger of losing the object (the object being a protection against every situation of helplessness)

in comparison with every other danger. It therefore encourages the individual to remain in the state of childhood, the period of life which is characterized by motor and mental helplessness.

So far we have had no occasion to regard objective anxiety in any different light from neurotic anxiety. We know what the distinction is. An objective danger is a danger which threatens a person from an external object, and a neurotic danger is one which threatens him from an instinctual demand. In so far as the instinctual demand is something objective, his neurotic anxiety, too, can be admitted to have an objective basis. We have seen that the reason why there seems to be a specially close connection between anxiety and neurosis is that the ego defends itself against an instinctual danger with the help of the anxiety reaction just as it does against an external objective danger, but that this line of defensive activity eventuates in a neurosis owing to an imperfection of the mental apparatus. We have also come to the conclusion that an instinctual demand often only becomes an (internal) danger because its gratification would bring on an external danger,

*i.e.* because the internal danger represents an external one.

On the other hand, the external (objective) danger must have managed to become internalized if it is to be significant for the ego. It must have been recognized as related to some situation of helplessness that has been experienced.<sup>1</sup> Man does not seem to have been endowed, or has been endowed in but small measure, with an instinctive recognition of the dangers that threaten him from without. Small children are constantly doing things which endanger their lives, and that is precisely why they cannot afford to be without a protecting object. With regard to the traumatic situation, in which the subject is helpless, external and internal dangers, objective dangers and instinctual demands converge. Whether the ego is suffering

<sup>1</sup> It may also often happen that although a danger-situation is correctly estimated in itself, a certain amount of instinctual anxiety is joined on to the objective anxiety. In that case the instinctual demand before whose gratification the ego recoils is a masochistic one: the instinct of destruction directed against the subject himself. Perhaps an addition of this kind explains cases in which reactions of anxiety are exaggerated, ineffectual or paralysing. Phobias of heights (windows, towers, precipices and the like) may have some such origin. Their hidden feminine significance is closely connected with masochism.

from a pain which will not stop or experiencing an accumulation of instinctual needs which cannot obtain gratification, the economic situation is the same and the motor helplessness of the ego finds expression in psychological helplessness.

In this connection the puzzling question of the phobias of early childhood deserves to be mentioned once again. Some of them, such as the fear of being alone or in the dark or with strangers, can be understood as reactions to the danger of losing the object. Others, like the fear of small animals, thunderstorms, etc., might perhaps be accounted for as vestigial traces of the congenital preparedness to meet objective dangers which is so strongly developed in other animals. In man only that part of this archaic inheritance is appropriate which has reference to the loss of object. If his childhood phobias become fixated and grow stronger and persist into later years, analysis shows that their content has become associated with instinctual demands and has come to stand for internal dangers as well.

## C

*ANXIETY, PAIN AND MOURNING*

So little is known about the psychology of processes of feeling that the tentative remarks I am about to make on the subject may claim a very lenient judgment. The problem before us arises out of the conclusion we have reached that anxiety comes to be a reaction to the danger of losing the object. Now we already know one reaction to the loss of an object, and that is mourning. The question therefore is, when does loss of object lead to anxiety and when to mourning? In discussing the subject of mourning on a previous occasion<sup>1</sup> I found that there was one feature about it which remained quite unexplained. This was its peculiar painfulness. And yet it somehow seems self-evident that separation from an object should be painful. Thus the problem becomes more complicated: when does separation from an object produce anxiety, when does it produce mourning and when does it produce, it may be, only pain?

Let me say at once that there is no prospect

<sup>1</sup> Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia' (1917), *Collected Papers* vol. iv.

of answering these questions at present. We must content ourselves with drawing certain distinctions and adumbrating certain possibilities.

Our starting-point will again be the one situation which we believe we understand—the situation of the infant when he is presented with a stranger instead of his mother. He will exhibit the anxiety which we have attributed to the danger of loss of object. But his anxiety is undoubtedly more complicated than this and merits a more thorough discussion. That he does have anxiety there can be no doubt; but the expression of his face and his reaction of crying indicate that he is feeling pain as well. Certain things seem to be confused in him which will later on be separated out. He cannot as yet distinguish between temporary absence and permanent loss. As soon as he misses his mother he behaves as if he were never going to see her again; and repeated consolatory experiences to the contrary are necessary before he learns that her disappearance is usually followed by her re-appearance. His mother encourages this piece of knowledge which is so vital to him by playing the familiar game of hiding her face



from him with her hands and then, to his joy, uncovering it again. In these circumstances he can, as it were, feel longing unmixed with despair.

In consequence of the infant's misunderstanding of the facts the situation of missing his mother is not a danger-situation but a traumatic one. Or, to put it more correctly, it is a traumatic situation if he happens at the time to be feeling a need which she is the one to gratify. It turns into a danger-situation if this need is not present at the moment. Thus, the first determinant of anxiety which the ego itself introduces is loss of perception of the object (which is equated with loss of the object itself). There is as yet no question of loss of love. It is only later on that experience teaches the child that the object can be present but angry with him; and then loss of love on the part of the object becomes a new and much more enduring danger and determinant of anxiety.

The traumatic situation of missing the mother differs in one important respect from the traumatic situation of birth. At birth no object existed and so no object could be missed.

Anxiety was the only reaction that occurred. Since then repeated situations of gratification have resulted in setting up the mother as an object; and this object, whenever the infant feels a need, receives an intense cathexis of longing. It is to this new aspect of things that the reaction of pain is referable. Pain is thus the actual reaction to loss of object and anxiety is the reaction to the danger which that loss entails and, in its further displacement, a reaction to the danger of the loss of object itself.

We know very little about pain either. The only fact we are certain of is that pain occurs in the first instance and as a regular thing whenever a stimulus which impinges on the periphery breaks through the protective barrier against stimuli and proceeds to act like a continual instinctual stimulus, against which muscular action, which is as a rule effective because it withdraws the place that is being stimulated from the stimulus, is powerless. If the pain does not proceed from a part of the skin but from an internal organ the situation is still the same. All that has happened is that a portion of the inner periphery has taken the place of the outer periphery. The child obviously has occasion to

undergo experiences of pain of this sort, which have no relation to its experiences of need. This determinant of the development of pain seems, however, to have very little similarity with the loss of an object. And besides, the element which is essential to pain, peripheral stimulation, is entirely absent in the child's situation of longing. Yet it cannot be for nothing that the common usage of speech should have created the notion of internal mental pain and have treated the feeling of loss of object as equivalent to physical pain.

When there is physical pain a high degree of what may be termed narcissistic cathexis of the painful place occurs. This cathexis continues to increase and tends, as it were, to empty the ego. It is well known that when internal organs are giving pain spatial and other images of the affected part of the body arise, though that part is not represented in conscious ideation on other occasions. Again, the remarkable truth that when the mind is diverted to some other interest by psychological means even the most intense physical pains fail to arise (I must not say 'remain unconscious' in this case) can be accounted for by the fact that there is a con-

centration of cathexis on the psychical representative of the part of the body which is giving pain. I think it is here that we shall find the point of analogy which has enabled us to carry sensations of pain over to the mental sphere. For the economic conditions that are produced by the intense cathexis of longing which is concentrated on the missed or lost object (a cathexis which steadily mounts up because it cannot be appeased) are the same as the economic conditions that are produced by the cathexis of pain which is concentrated on the injured part of the body. Thus the element of the peripheral causation of physical pain can be left out of account. The transition from physical pain to mental pain corresponds to a change from narcissistic cathexis to object-cathexis. The object whose presentation is highly cathected by instinctual need plays the same rôle as the part of the body which is cathected by an increase of stimulus. The continuous nature of the cathectic process and the impossibility of inhibiting it produce the same state of mental helplessness. If the feeling of unpleasure which thus arises has the specific quality of pain (a quality which cannot be more exactly described)

instead of manifesting itself in the reactive form of anxiety, this may very likely be due to a certain factor which we have not sufficiently made use of in our explanatory efforts. I refer to the high level of cathexis and attachment at which the unpleasurable processes we have been discussing take place.

We know of yet another reaction of feeling to the loss of an object, and that is mourning. But we have no longer any difficulty in accounting for it. Mourning occurs under the influence of reality-testing; for the latter function demands categorically from the bereaved person that he should separate himself from the object, since it no longer exists. Mourning is entrusted with the task of carrying out this retreat from the object in all those situations in which it was the recipient of a high degree of cathexis. That this separation should be painful fits in with what we have just said, in view of the high degree and insatiable nature of the cathexis of longing which is concentrated on the object by the bereaved person during the reproduction of the situations in which he must undo the ties that attach him to it.

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